BITMAP BOOKS PRESENTS

THE ART OF POINT & Click ADVENTURE GAMES

THE ART OF POINT & CLICK ADVENTURE GAMES

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Introduction

It may be hard to imagine now, but there was a brief time, somewhere in the midst of the last few decades of the last century, when the point-and-click adventure pretty much conquered the world. Building on the foundations of the graphic and text adventures that came before them, they offered an intuitive control system, free of typing and random word guessing, directly connecting players to their characters and environments in a way that had never been seen before. And this, of course, meant everyone could finally enjoy them – even those of us that were terrible at spelling.

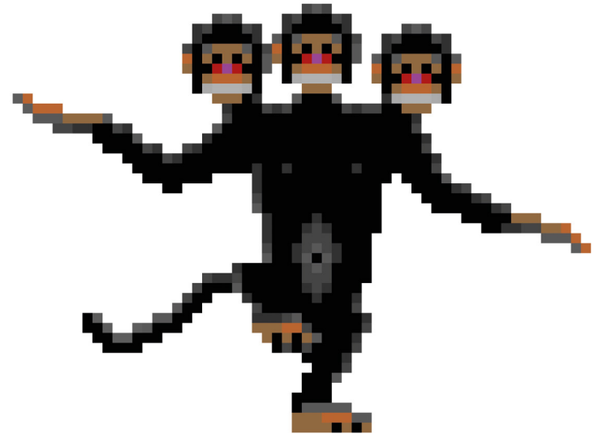
Point-and-click adventures took us to wondrous locations around the globe, through fiction and reality, back (and forward) through time, and even into the depths of outer space. We could be whisked into the heart of the Amazon jungle (albeit by crashing a transport plane into a lagoon), brought to meet the Founding Fathers (and help Benjamin Franklin go kite-flying), in front of the World's Largest Ball of Twine, and even transported to the surface of Mars in a heavily modified minivan.

These games introduced us to some of the most memorable characters ever to grace a computer screen, including a sardonic teenage wizard called Simon, a chic Parisienne called Nico, and a droll canine called Sam, along with Max, a hyperactive talking bunny rabbit. And who could forget the bumbling would-be pirate Guybrush Threepwood, his long-suffering love interest, Elaine, and his root beer averse nemesis, the ghost pirate LeChuck?

Point-and-click adventures were often educational too, whether it be learning about the Minoan civilisation of Knossos in *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, how to deal with an angry goat in *Broken Sword*, that Richard Boysen invented the boysenberry in *Leisure Suit Larry*, or the fact you should never pay more than 20 bucks for a computer game in *The Secret of Monkey Island*.

And with so many of these titles, the artists behind the on-screen visuals really knocked it out of the park. Here we have assembled some of the most eye-catching (and easiest to get to without a lot of scary puzzles) artwork from a diverse range of classic adventures for your delectation, along with a few words from the many brilliant people that helped to create the games.

Enjoy the book, and remember…
the monkeys are still listening.



Foreword by Gary Whitta

I'm fairly certain that, without adventure games, I wouldn't be who I am today. I know there's a very good chance I wouldn't have my career as a writer, as I can so vividly trace back my affection for the written word not just to the comics and sci-fi novels I read as a boy, but to the games I played. Growing up in England in the 1980s, my formative gaming experiences with the Sinclair ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 were largely defined by the early text and graphic adventures of the time. *The Hobbit*, *Mountains of Ket* (say 'POLO' to open the door in mint condition!), and of course those groundbreaking Infocom titles like *Zork*, *A Mind Forever Voyaging* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Every month I'd search the pages of *Sinclair User* magazine for the sage counsel of Gordo Greatbelly, who dispensed in-character game tips and advice from his regular seat at the Dancing Ogre tavern, haven for weary text adventurers looking for solutions to obstinate puzzles (and cheap ale). So taken was I by the worlds these games beckoned me into with just the power of words, that I wrote my first ever short stories as fan-fiction tributes to two of my favourites: Infocom's sci-fi thriller *Suspended* and the Interplay detective mystery *Borrowed Time*. God, it's all coming back to me like it was yesterday. Yeah, now I'm entirely sure that's exactly when, why, and how my writing career began.

Later it would be the flashier 16-bit graphic adventures like Magnetic Scrolls' *The Pawn* and *Guild of Thieves* that seduced me with their evocative text, beautifully illustrated by 32-colour graphics, which were stunning at the time. It was that combination of equally sumptuous prose and illustration that pulled me in, each game a lavish picture book, with me as the main character. And then the world really opened up with the advent of the computer mouse (some of us are old enough to remember when that was still a new and magical thing), which in turn led to the advent of the point-and-click adventure. Several developers blazed similar and simultaneous trails in this field but for me it was always the Lucasfilm games; having grown up a *Hitchhiker's* addict, titles like *Maniac Mansion*, *The Secret of Monkey Island* and *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* offered a similar combination of wild fantasy and irreverent humour that I found not just irresistible but almost impossible to find in any other medium. And though the comedic Lucasfilm adventure titles are the ones best remembered, I'd be remiss not to also express my love for those more serious but equally captivating – the dark Spielbergian sci-fi of *The Dig* and the dreamlike, melodic and wondrous *Loom*.

"I felt privileged to write this foreword, but honestly the real treat has been simply to page through the book you're holding and feel all the memories of these games smother me like a warm blanket."

By the 1990s I was working in games journalism, and doing what I could to still champion what by that time had become to feel like a waning medium. Lucasfilm Games (by now LucasArts) and Ken and Roberta Williams' incredibly influential Sierra On-Line continued to keep adventuring alive but increasingly as the genre's only remaining standard-bearers. In the UK, where adventure games have always enjoyed a particularly faithful following, the scene remained fertile ground largely thanks to the work of Charles Cecil with his British-made *Broken Sword* series and the breathtaking dystopian vision that was *Beneath a Steel Sky*. But for incurable nostalgists like myself it felt more and more as though the sun was setting on the genre as burgeoning computer horsepower pushed developers toward faster, more action-based genres. Even Sierra and LucasArts, adventurers to the core, were diversifying into flight simulation, sports, and strategy games. Adventuring, it seemed, was becoming a dying art.

So, where are we today? The good news is that all that once was old is new again. Adventure gaming, fallow for so many of the post-millennial years, is not only back but arguably more vibrant than ever before. Credit a penchant for nostalgia, perhaps, as many of today's game developers who grew up playing those early classics now channel that affection into their own new creations. Certainly we must credit the enduring passion of many of those early games' designers who still keep the flame today; the LucasArts alumni who helped lead a recent renaissance in interactive storytelling at Telltale Games, and in particular Tim Schafer and Ron Gilbert, the geniuses behind many of Lucas' pioneering hits, who continue to advance the medium while charmingly honouring its past with games like *Broken Age* and *Thimbleweed Park*. And the genre at large continues to grow in a way that has seen it evolve far beyond its humble text-based roots while remaining wholly faithful to its original intent – to spellbind gamers with a captivating story that unfolds at a deliberate pace, with puzzles and narrative revelations that delight in equal measure. Modern classics like *Oxenfree*, *What Remains of Edith Finch*, *Gone Home*, *Night in the Woods*, *Kentucky Route Zero*, *Firewatch*, *Papers Please*, *Her Story*, *Life is Strange*, *The Stanley Parable* and countless others all owe at least a partial debt to the games so beautifully curated in this book.

I felt privileged to write this foreword, but honestly the real treat has been simply to page through the book you're holding and feel all the memories of these games smother me like a warm blanket. I've always felt like the adventure genre was worthy of more appreciation, and you'll find no greater appreciation than this one. Here the games speak for themselves through their gorgeous imagery, and so too do many of the innovators who created them in illuminating new interviews. I hope you'll derive as much pleasure from it all as I did. And now...

> TURN PAGE

Gary Whitta is the former Editor-in-Chief of PC Gamer magazine. He currently works as a screenwriter for film and television and as a video game narrative consultant.

FOREWORD

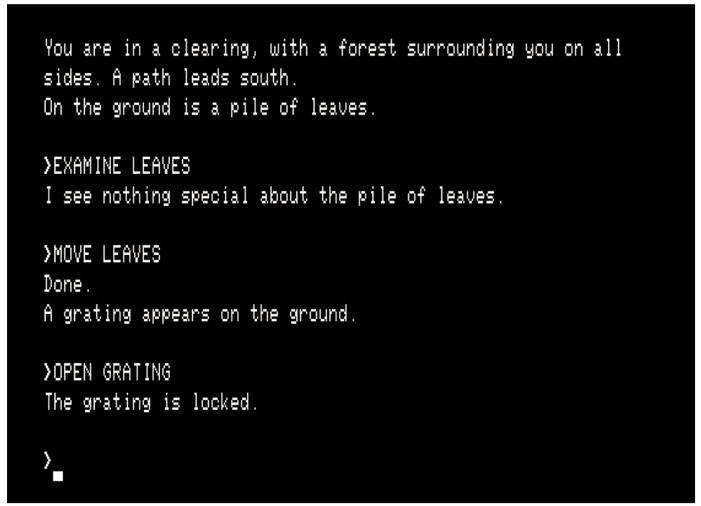
The history of point-and-click adventure games

From its humble 2D origins to recent hyper-realistic outings, the graphic adventure has been entertaining players for decades, with companies like LucasArts, Sierra, Revolution, Westwood Studios and Adventure Soft all contributing seminal classics to the point-and-click library. Join us as we take a look back at the birth, evolution and resurrection of a truly classic genre.

Despite the relentless march of technology it's quite rare for a video game genre to boom to the point that it becomes dominant for several years and then bust so dramatically that it falls almost entirely out of favour. Shooters have evolved over time from crude, single-screen 2D affairs to intense and immersive first-person blasters, while the humble platformer has gone from the likes of *Donkey Kong* to *Super Mario Odyssey*, a game which wilfully subverts convention in the most wonderful ways imaginable. Trends come and go but no genre has experienced quite the same meteoric rise and fall as the point-and-click adventure; this game style rode a wave of technological advancement in the '80s by taking advantage of colour displays, high-resolution graphics and mouse-driven interfaces before capitalising on CD-ROM's ability to supply almost endless storage for animated cutscenes, full voice acting and atmospheric soundtracks. However, after almost a decade of being one of gaming's most popular draws, the point-and-click adventure retreated from the limelight, and only recently has it emerged to reclaim some of its past glories in a climate which, seemingly above all else, celebrates nostalgia.

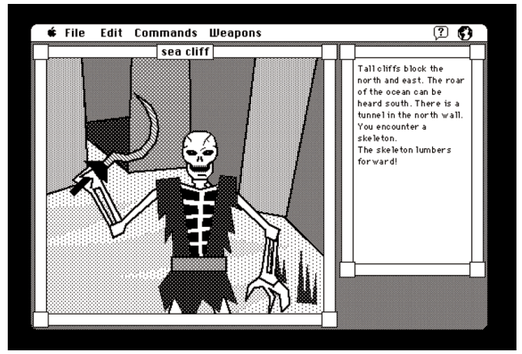
"Trends come and go but no genre has experienced quite the same meteoric rise and fall as the point-and-click adventure."

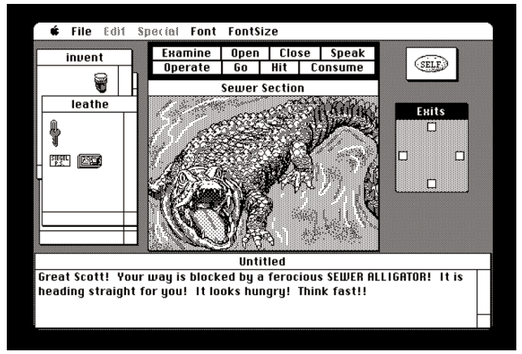
The point-and-click adventure's origins lie in a related genre, the text adventure. In the early days of the industry the average personal computer – intended for displaying screen upon screen of dull text and numbers, lest we forget – simply wasn't capable of producing the kind of images that could convince anybody that they were inhabiting another world. The solution was to use text to transport the player to other realms and realities, and a series of highly successful titles appeared, including *Zork*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Colossal Cave Adventure*. Using text not only allowed developers to overcome the shortcomings of the hardware, it also enabled them to leverage the imagination of the player to conjure up dramatic scenes and tense encounters. However, it was obvious that this genre would benefit greatly from on-screen visuals to accompany the textual descriptions, and that came to pass in the early '80s, when titles like *The Pawn*, *Mystery House* and *The Hobbit* skilfully fused rudimentary pictures with words to produce a far more immersive experience. *Mystery House* was the work of husband-and-wife team Roberta and Ken Williams, founders of On-Line Systems. In spite of its incredibly basic vector-based monochrome visuals it was a striking commercial success for the fledgling studio, earning the couple a cool $167,000 for their efforts. Off the back of this triumph the pair would be commissioned by IBM to create a game to show off the visual capabilities of its new PCjr system. 1984's *King's Quest* showcased colour visuals, a pseudo-3D environment and even an on-screen representation of the player's character, effectively laying down many of the point-and-click genre's foundations, despite lacking the one thing most players would come to directly associate with this type of game: a mouse-driven interface. Instead, *King's Quest* was built using Sierra's 'Adventure Game Interpreter' – an engine which continued to use a text parser to interpret the player's intentions, with movement being controlled by directional keys on the keyboard.



Early adventure games, such as *Zork* from 1980, were purely text-based.

Games such as *The Pawn* and *Mystery House* started to introduce graphics to accompany the text commands.





Enchanted Scepters and *Déjà Vu: A Nightmare Comes True!!* were the first Macintosh titles to introduce full mouse control for commands.

Despite its myriad problems – the parser was imperfect and navigating the protagonist around the 'fake' 3D space was often a frustrating affair – *King's Quest* sold well and is credited by many with establishing a template that would be copied by countless titles over the next few years.

Despite *King's Quest*'s success and Sierra's other forays into the world of visual adventures, it would take a technological leap of another kind to really complete the picture. Typing in text was cumbersome and broke the flow of the game, drawing the player's attention away from those eye-catching, 16-colour visuals. It was the 1984 release of another piece of rival hardware, the Apple Macintosh, which provided the final piece of the point-and-click puzzle. While Apple's new machine shipped with a monochrome display, it boasted a much higher screen resolution than its rivals. However, it was the machine's interface which was truly groundbreaking – it had a mouse as standard. Apple co-founder Steve Jobs is often credited with inventing the mouse but he actually borrowed the idea from Xerox, taking the company's $300 three-button design and streamlining it into a single-button device which cost just $15 to manufacture. Game designers wasted no time in leveraging the Mac's revolutionary control system and high-res screen to craft unique adventure titles; Silicon Beach Software led the way with 1984's *Enchanted Scepters*, widely credited as being the first 'true' point-and-click adventure, but it was ICOM Simulations – founded by Tod Zipnick, who tragically passed away with Hodgkin's disease in 1991, just as his company was beginning to become financially successful – and its 'MacVenture' series which really pushed the envelope. 1985's *Déjà Vu: A Nightmare Comes True!!* may have adopted a first-person viewpoint but in all other respects it showcased the hallmarks of the point-and-click genre: an inventory, action verbs – such as 'Examine', 'Open' and 'Speak' – and the ability to drag-and-drop items. Ironically, *Déjà Vu* found the most success on a system that was woefully inadequate for this unique interface; it was ported to the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1990 with low-resolution colour visuals and a simplified control system to account for the console's lack of a mouse.

"In the early days of the industry the average personal computer – intended for displaying screen upon screen of dull text and numbers, lest we forget – simply wasn't capable of producing the kind of images that could convince anybody that they were inhabiting another world."

King's Quest featured full-colour '3D' environments. It used the cursor keys for movement but still relied on a text parser for commands.

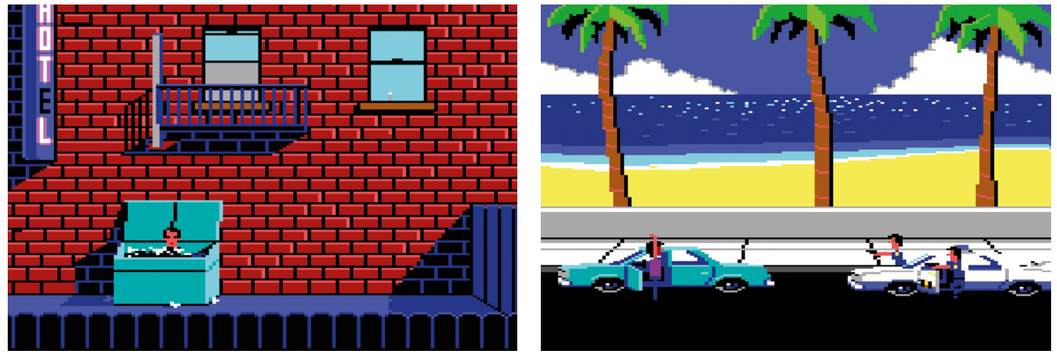
The Uninvited (1986), *Shadowgate* (1987) and the almost inevitable *Déjà Vu II: Lost in Las Vegas* (1988) followed, and ICOM then branched out into the world of CD-ROM with its groundbreaking *Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective* series. By this point the company had been comfortably surpassed by On-Line Systems, now known as Sierra On-Line, which continued to develop its 'Quest' series of adventures.

King's Quest's initial success on the PCjr had ensured that sequels would follow, but Roberta and Ken Williams were keen to branch out from the fairy-tale setting and explore new narratives. The first was 1986's *Space Quest: Chapter I – The Sarien Encounter*, a sci-fi adventure which didn't take itself at all seriously and would set the tone for many of Sierra's future titles. 1987's *Police Quest* was less humorous but still had moments of mirth – despite the unnervingly realistic depiction of police procedure thanks to the creative involvement of Jim Walls, a retired highway patrol officer – but it was 1987's *Leisure Suit Larry* which perhaps typified Sierra's approach at the time. The brainchild of Al Lowe, Larry was a balding, poorly-dressed no-hoper whose singular goal in life was to bed as many women as possible, ignoring the odds stacked against him. The game's visuals were blocky and crude, but its risqué subject matter ensured fame and fortune, as well as multiple sequels across computers, consoles and – more recently – smartphones. Ironically, the franchise's reputation for lewd content has perhaps been exaggerated over time and the earlier entries are more memorable for their witty dialogue and amusing storylines than the amount of crudely-animated flesh on display.

"1984's King's Quest *showcased colour visuals, a pseudo-3D environment and even an on-screen representation of the player's character, effectively laying down many of the point-and-click genre's foundations."*

Sierra would eventually retire its ageing AGI engine and replace it with the 'Sierra Creative Interpreter', or SCI for short. 1988's *King's Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella* used SCI to deliver massively improved visuals, and the game was also one of the first PC titles to support sound card hardware.

However, by this point the company had some serious competition in the realm of point-and-click adventures from a company founded by the man behind *Star Wars*, George Lucas. Lucasfilm Games was established in 1982 and initially focused on intense action titles – such as *Ballblazer, Rescue on Fractalus*! and *Koronis Rift* – and it wasn't until 1986 that the studio ventured into the genre it would come to shape and dominate. *Labyrinth: The Computer Game* was based on the movie starring the late rock star David Bowie, and used word wheels – one for verbs and one for nouns – to avoid the usual confusion generated by text parsers. *Hitchhiker's Guide* author Douglas Adams also contributed to the design of the game, which, despite its initial critical and commercial success, has been forgotten over the years – an unjust fate, since *Labyrinth*



Following the success of *King's Quest*, Sierra created new franchises such as *Leisure Suit Larry* and *Police Quest*.

inspired Lucasfilm's next foray in the genre and was one of the most influential point-and-click titles ever made.

1987's *Maniac Mansion* was conceived by Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick, the latter having worked as an artist on *Labyrinth*. The two bonded over their affection for B movies and oddball humour, and decided to create a game which reflected these shared passions. *Maniac Mansion's* non-linear progression, multiple characters and detailed visuals made it instantly memorable, but perhaps its most enduring legacy is the introduction of SCUMM – also known as 'Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion' – a fully mouse-driven interface which gave the player a set of input commands as well as the ability to interact with and combine objects in their inventory. SCUMM would be employed in several subsequent Lucasfilm adventure games and inspired countless copycat titles which adopted almost entirely the same approach. While its interface became practically ubiquitous, *Maniac Mansion's* design was equally important; unlike many of Sierra's adventure games – in which the player could die simply by picking up the wrong object – *Maniac Mansion* established what would become a core tenet of Lucasfilm's point-and-click ethos. Gilbert reasoned that punishing the player for simply trying things out was needlessly brutal and sadistic, and he made attempts to ensure that his games were free from situations where the player would die or end up being stuck in a dead end because they hadn't collected the correct item. The onus would be on encouraging players to experiment without fear of reprisal, and this opened the door for the wild and often obtuse logic puzzles that became part of the company's DNA. After finding success on the Commodore 64, *Maniac Mansion* was ported to a wide range of other systems, including the Nintendo Entertainment System – marking one of Lucasfilm's first big steps into the world of console gaming. The NES port created a whole new legion of fans, although Nintendo's draconian policies regarding software content forced significant changes to be made to secure a release.

Labyrinth's verb and noun word wheels.

1988's *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* was the second game to utilise the SCUMM game engine, and boasted a very similar style of graphics and humour, while the following year's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* leveraged the fame of the popular Hollywood action series to create a rip-roaring quest which, for once, dialled back the zany humour. 1990's *Loom* arguably went a step further, presenting the player with a fantasy storyline so earnest it could have leapt from the pages of J.R.R. Tolkien himself. *Loom* is also notable for forgoing the typical SCUMM interface and instead using magical four-note tunes to solve puzzles and interact with the environment. *Loom* took the point-and-click genre in an interesting new direction, and had it been released in any other year it perhaps would have gained more recognition and lasting fame. Unfortunately, *Loom* was joined in 1990 by fellow Lucasfilm release *The Secret of Monkey Island*, not only one of the most famous point-and-click games ever made but also arguably one of the most beloved titles in the history of interactive entertainment; it's fair to say that it rather overshadowed its stablemate.

Ron Gilbert, aided by Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman, set the adventure on a fictional Caribbean island and was heavily inspired by Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* theme park ride. What made *Monkey Island* truly unique was its humour; the game lampooned the common preconception of pirates and took every opportunity to poke fun not only at the setting and its characters, but also the player. However, one thing Gilbert was not prepared to do was punish people for making the wrong move; *Monkey Island* continued the good work seen in *Maniac Mansion* and encouraged experimentation. The game's combat section was based around insults rather than trading actual blows, and this would become one of the title's most famous elements; acclaimed sci-fi author Orson Scott Card – the brains behind the seminal novel *Ender's Game* – contributed some of the more cutting insults during a visit to Skywalker Ranch. Dialogue trees for conversations were also introduced, and the SCUMM engine was refined over its previous iterations. Although the original PC EGA version was limited to just 16 on-screen colours, the later VGA edition gave the designers 256 hues to work with, which resulted in some particularly striking hand-drawn close-ups for certain characters. Despite its enduring fame and incredible influence, *The Secret of Monkey Island*

▲ *Maniac Mansion* introduced the revolutionary SCUMM engine, whose clickable verbs performed actions such as 'Open' and 'Read'.

wasn't a massive commercial success at the time of its release. Development of the sequel began before the original was even published, and had the studio waited to see the numbers we may never have gotten a sequel. Thankfully, that particular timeline never occurred and 1991 saw the release of *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*. The evolution that had taken place between the two games was obvious: the 256-colour VGA graphics, while still limited to just 320x200 pixels, possessed astonishing detail and created a truly evocative atmosphere. Whereas the original game – even in its enhanced VGA iteration – had a rather basic visual style which used few colours, *Monkey Island 2's* gorgeous hand-painted artwork made its locations spring to life, and the characters themselves boasted superior animation and detail. The widespread adoption of sound cards on PCs meant that audio could be refined to the point where music would react to on-screen events; the iMUSE system – created by Michael Land and Peter McConnell – allowed tracks to blend seamlessly into one another rather than ending and beginning abruptly. The amusing and witty writing so prevalent in the first game was turned up a notch too, and *Monkey Island 2* became one of the year's stand-out PC gaming hits – a fine way for the newly-rechristened LucasArts to kick off a new period in the company's history.

1992's *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* toned down the humour while presenting players with three possible pathways through the adventure, and sold over a million copies across all of the formats it was published on. Visually similar to *Monkey Island 2*, the game tried to create realistic representations of human characters – something which could not be said of 1993's *Day of the Tentacle*, a sequel to *Maniac Mansion* which used a sumptuous cartoon-like art style that would become a signature look for LucasArts games over the next few years. Inspired by Looney Toons animated shorts (apparently the legendary Chuck Jones even visited the team during development to provide feedback and ideas), the game's bold visuals allowed for more expressive characters which in turn enhanced the already side-splitting level of humour. The in-game animations alone took a year to create, and a lengthy introduction sequence set the scene at the start of the adventure – a feature which would become a prerequisite as CD-ROM technology gave game developers so much storage that they struggled to fill it with anything more meaningful than music and FMV sequences.

"1987's Maniac Mansion *was conceived by Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick, the latter having worked as an artist on* Labyrinth. *The two bonded over their affection for B movies and oddball humour, and decided to create a game which reflected these shared passions."*

To release a game as good as *Day of the Tentacle* in a single year was remarkable enough, but what's truly stunning is that LucasArts also published *Sam & Max Hit the Road* in 1993 as well. This dog and

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"Despite its enduring fame and incredible influence, The Secret of Monkey Island *was not a massive commercial success at the time of release."*

rabbit duo were the stars of a comic created by artist and LucasArts employee Steve Purcell, who'd previously contributed to *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, both *Monkey Island* games and *Fate of Atlantis*. LucasArts saw Purcell's comic book creation as a viable franchise and offered him the chance to turn the property into a point-and-click adventure. Like *Day of the Tentacle*, *Sam & Max* used a bold cartoon style which made the whole thing feel like an interactive animated movie – a feeling that was reinforced by the fact that it was one of the first games to utilise CD-ROM technology for full voice acting. LucasArts had created enhanced CD versions of past titles, like *Loom* and *Monkey Island*, but had used the space for improved music instead of vocal tracks. Elsewhere, the innovations came thick and fast; the SCUMM engine was comprehensively overhauled, removing the verb tiles at the bottom of the screen and bonding them to the mouse cursor, where they could be cycled through using the right-hand mouse button. The inventory was also relocated to its own screen. The end result was more real estate for the gorgeous artwork, and it also made locations feel bigger and more expansive. Finally, the conversation trees were altered so that players could select an icon representing their response – a change that prevented upcoming punchlines being ruined because you could read them before the characters delivered them.

By this juncture the humble point-and-click adventure had begun to dominate the sales charts, at least on PC. However, the advent of CD-ROM technology, while enabling companies to enrich adventure games with voice acting and additional animation, introduced the first genuine threat to the genre's commercial fortunes. Titles like *The 7th Guest* and *Myst* used CGI visuals and full motion video to create realistic-looking environments; viewed from a first-person perspective, this imagery drove gaming realism to a whole new level. *Myst* in particular was notable for taking the core mechanics of the point-and-click adventure – mind-bending logic puzzles and a gripping storyline – and placing them in an immersive first-person world fashioned using cutting-edge, pre-rendered graphics. Traditional hand-drawn 2D art, as attractive as it undoubtedly was, seemed old-fashioned when placed alongside these hyper-realistic worlds. Copycat titles inevitably followed as millions of PC owners invested in CD-ROM drives to play this new generation of adventure. Despite the fact that such games were incredibly linear and often little more than glorified puzzle-solving exercises, they sold by the truckload and, perhaps, convinced companies like Sierra and LucasArts to rethink their approach to art design. Systems like SCUMM – with its verb tiles and inventory drawer taking up almost half of the screen – were the old way of thinking, and studios realised they had to alter the way their games looked; as much of the screen as possible should be used for eye-catching artwork, which meant streamlining the interface dramatically.

▲ LucasArts followed up *Maniac Mansion* with a string of hits, including titles such as *The Secret of Monkey Island* and *Loom*.

▲ CD-ROM titles *The 7th Guest* (left) and *Myst* (right) embraced the latest technology, using pre-rendered CGI visuals to impressive effect.

While LucasArts carved out a profitable niche creating cartoon-like adventures bursting with character and amusing one-liners, rival developer Sierra On-Line decided to take a somewhat different route with its 1993 title *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers*. Designed and directed by Jane Jensen, *Gabriel Knight* had its moments of brevity but was primarily focused on the titular character's investigation of a series of grisly local murders for his new book. Despite a rather convoluted interface the game was a commercial and critical success, and Sierra wisely used the storage potential offered by CD-ROM to include full voice acting with Hollywood talent that included Tim Curry, Mark Hamill and Michael Dorn. A 1995 sequel – *The Beast Within* – used FMV and digitised actors to great effect, while the third outing – 1999's *Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned* – showcased 3D visuals that have, ironically, caused it to age far worse than its forerunners.

"However, the advent of CD-ROM technology, while enabling companies to enrich adventure games with voice acting and additional animation, introduced the first genuine threat to the genre's commercial fortunes."

1994 would be a year of rest for LucasArts, but in 1995 it returned with two of its most ambitious projects to date. Tim Schafer helmed *Full Throttle*, LucasArts' first game to be released exclusively on CD-ROM. The title took advantage of the increased storage of the format by including epic animated sequences (some of which made use of pre-rendered backgrounds and vehicles), full voice acting (including the talents of Mark Hamill), a lengthy storyline packed with unique locations, and a licenced soundtrack by American rock band The Gone Jackals. *Full Throttle* sold over a million units – a considerable success for LucasArts at the time. 1995's other title was one of LucasArt's biggest-selling yet, but endured a troubled gestation and ultimately disappointed many fans of the studio. *The Dig* was conceived by director Steven Spielberg many years previously but was shelved as he deemed it too expensive to film. In 1989, Spielberg attended a meeting at Skywalker Ranch with the objective of turning the idea into a game; it would take another six years for the project to see the light of day. Although it sold briskly upon its initial release, *The Dig* received some lukewarm reviews due to its difficult puzzles, uneven voice acting and lack of trademark LucasArts humour – although this was perhaps less of a fault with the game itself, and more to do with the studio's run of amusing adventure titles which led fans to expect more of the same each time. Ironically, as LucasArts was taking flak for not sticking to its humour-led formula, titles such as 1995's *Flight of the Amazon Queen* – an Indiana Jones-style caper clearly inspired by LucasArts' output – hit the market to relieve some of the disappointment.

Indeed, the market for point-and-click adventures was burgeoning, and more and more studios around the globe were getting involved. In France, Delphine Software produced *Operation Stealth* (released in the US as *James Bond: 007 – The Stealth Affair*), *Future Wars* and *Cruise for a Corpse*, while Italian outfit Dynabyte contributed the offbeat *Nippon Safes Inc.* in 1992. Westwood Studios – previously famous for its strategy titles and the excellent first-person dungeon-crawler *Eye of the Beholder* – contributed the *Legend of Kyrandia* trilogy to the genre, a series which boasted some gorgeous 2D artwork from Rick Parks, who tragically passed away in 1996, aged just 46.

In 1993 – the same year that Sierra started the *Gabriel Knight* series – a comparatively small UK studio by the name of Adventure Soft released a title that would carve out its own niche. *Simon the Sorcerer* was the creation of a father-and-son team; Mike Woodroffe served as director and producer, while his son, Simon, wrote the dialogue. It copied the SCUMM interface almost to the letter, but infused the entire experience with a Terry Pratchett-style humour and some sumptuous artwork, created by a team of artists – Paul Drummond, Kevin Preston, Maria Drummond, Jeff Wall and Karen Pinchin – who worked separately from the main development team, producing black-and-white designs which were scanned into a computer and then colourised. While some critics grumbled about the game's linear nature, *Simon the Sorcerer* was a smash hit for Adventure Soft and would later be re-released on CD-ROM with *Red Dwarf's* Chris Barrie voicing the lead character. A full-blown and well-received sequel followed in 1995 with Brian Bowles replacing Barrie as the voice of Simon, and in 1997 Adventure Soft launched *The Feeble Files*, a sci-fi comedy which used CGI visuals and featured the dulcet tones of Barrie's fellow *Red Dwarf* cast member, Robert Llewellyn.

A misguided attempt to update the *Simon the Sorcerer* franchise with 3D visuals in 2002 found a less receptive audience, but the continued popularity of point-and-click games in mainland Europe enabled German developer Silver Style Entertainment to produce the fourth and fifth *Simon* games in 2007 and 2009. *Simon the Sorcerer 6: Between Worlds* was mooted in 2014 – with Barrie returning on vocal duties – but in 2016 the project appeared to have stalled.

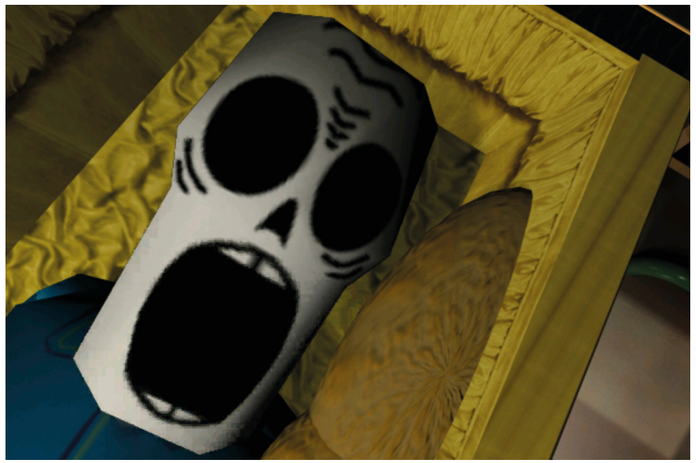
"While LucasArts carved out a profitable niche creating cartoon-like adventures bursting with character and amusing one-liners, rival Sierra On-Line decided to take a somewhat different route with its 1993 title Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers*."*

Core Design – the UK outfit which would later become famous for creating Lara Croft – released *Curse of Enchantia* in 1992, following up with its spiritual successor *Universe* two years later. Revolution Software, another British codehouse, also jumped on the point-and-click bandwagon with a title which attempted to cater for more mature audiences. Having released the well-received *Lure of the Temptress* in 1992, Revolution – co-founded by Charles Cecil – adapted its 'Virtual Theatre' engine to incorporate the designs of highly respected comic book artist Dave Gibbons, famous for illustrating the cult graphic novel *Watchmen*. The end result was 1994's *Beneath a Steel Sky*, a game which is still regarded as a masterpiece of interactive storytelling to this day. Gibbons created the initial scenes using pencil, and these were later coloured in and scanned into a computer where they could be transformed into the gorgeous 256-colour, 320x200-pixel graphics seen in the PC version. The power of CD-ROM was harnessed for a full 'talkie' version of the game, for which Revolution enlisted classically-trained actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company. Despite spending two days recording more than 5,000 lines of dialogue, the results were deemed unsuitable and everything was re-recorded using voice actors instead – an indication of how serious Revolution was about making the project perfect. The hard graft paid off as *Beneath a Steel Sky* won praise for its adult tone, engaging dialogue and striking comic-book art style, and established Revolution as one of the world's leading point-and-click studios. The company followed up with *Broken Sword: The Shadow of the Templars* in 1996, a title which had more in common with Sierra's *Gabriel Knight* than it did with LucasArts' brand of chucklesome adventures. Its storyline focused on the mysterious Knights Templar and – despite its cartoon-like visuals, courtesy of animator Mike Burgess and Don Bluth studios' Eoghan Cahill and Neil Breen – *Broken Sword* dealt with some particularly mature themes. Predictably, sequels would follow, and even today Revolution continues to push the franchise forward using current technologies.

By the middle of the '90s, the unthinkable was happening: point-and-click adventures were beginning to lose favour with gamers. The real-time 3D revolution had begun in earnest, and a new generation of graphics cards were about to hit the PC market, making visually-opulent, three-dimensional titles the norm. LucasArts had dabbled in this arena with the likes of *Star Wars: Dark Forces*, *X-Wing* and *Outlaws*, but it continued to support the adventure genre with big-name releases. 1997's *Curse of Monkey Island* was significant in many ways: it was the first outing in the franchise to lack the involvement of series creator Ron Gilbert, and the final game to use the SCUMM engine – although the massively refined 'verb coin' interface bore little resemblance to the system introduced in *Maniac Mansion* more than a decade earlier. The game was also notable for being the first in the series to utilise voice acting, with Dominic Armato bringing hero Guybrush Threepwood to life with a superb vocal performance. 1998's *Grim Fandango* saw the studio move away from hand-drawn 2D visuals entirely and adopt a 3D approach using the new GrimE Engine, which mixed real-time 3D with pre-rendered backgrounds. Tim Schafer was once again at the helm, imbuing the game with a dark and witty sense of humour, which won it numerous admirers and plenty of critical acclaim. However, it underperformed commercially and put LucasArts one step closer to pulling out of the genre; 2000's *Escape from Monkey Island* proved to be the company's final contribution to the world of the point-and-click adventure, even if its cumbersome keyboard-or-joystick interface meant that it wasn't technically point or click.

▲ A variety of developers, including Delphine and Adventure Soft, jumped on board the point-and-click bandwagon.

Curse of Monkey Island featured cartoon-style animation and full voice acting.



Grim Fandango was the first LucasArts title to feature 3D pre-rendered backgrounds.

Sierra encountered similar woes, too: 1998's *King's Quest: Mask of Eternity* used polygon visuals but failed to recreate the commercial success of previous games in the series. By the end of the decade Sierra had been sold to a larger firm and its original studio shuttered. While the company name would endure, it had little connection with the studio founded by Ken and Roberta Williams in 1979.

Westwood Studios – which had attempted to challenge LucasArts and Sierra's dominance of the genre in the early '90s with the aforementioned *Legend of Kyrandia* trilogy – stepped into the void left by its two erstwhile opponents with one of the most celebrated point-and-click outings of the decade. 1997's *Blade Runner* was set in the same timeframe as the iconic 1982 movie of the same name, and used a combination of pre-rendered images and voxel graphics to concoct a rain-soaked 2019 Los Angeles. Even more remarkable was the fact that the game ran in real-time, unlike other examples of the genre, which would only move forward as the player solved puzzles and interacted with other characters. With sales of over a million units, *Blade Runner* provided a stay of execution for the otherwise ailing genre, which had seen its reputation plummet against the rise of the first-person shooter. LucasArts and Sierra had, by this stage, effectively walked away from the point-and-click adventure, and other high-profile projects – such as Jordan 'Prince of Persia' Mechner's lavish, rotoscoped adventure *The Last Express* and Virgin's technically stunning *Toonstruck* – were crushing commercial disappointments. However, in Europe the genre continued to be a viable proposition, albeit on a much smaller scale. Norwegian studio Funcom's *The Longest Journey* arrived in 1999 to critical acclaim, while French firm Microïds enjoyed similar success with *Syberia* three years later. Both titles used high-resolution CGI visuals to superb effect, creating a deeply immersive experience while remaining true to the core mechanics of the genre.

"With sales of over a million units, Blade Runner *provided a stay of execution for the otherwise ailing genre."*

Despite these minor triumphs, it seemed like the mouse-driven adventure had reached the end of the road; it would take two significant technological leaps to revive the fortunes of the genre. The first occurred in 2004, when Nintendo released its DS handheld. Equipped with a resistive touchscreen and stylus, the diminutive console revolutionised the way in which players interacted with games. It also provided the perfect platform for an adventure game revival, with Revolution Software's *Broken Sword* getting a timely re-release on the system. This was accompanied by a new generation of titles which shared a vital connection with the glory days of the genre. Capcom's *Ace Attorney* series – which actually began life on the Game Boy Advance in its native Japan – took puzzle-solving and character interaction and placed them within a courtroom environment, while *Secret Files: Tunguska* adapted the Windows version of the game for portable play. The Nintendo DS introduced touch-driven controls to millions of players, but the next step of this evolutionary process followed in 2007, with the launch of the Apple iPhone. Within the space of a few years, the App Store triggered a self-publishing explosion and saw companies like Revolution, LucasArts and Adventure Soft resurrect their classic

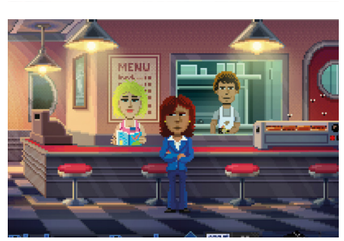
THE HISTORY OF POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE GAMES

1997's *Blade Runner* featured pre-rendered images and voxel graphics.

franchises for the world of smartphones, an act which placed the genre back in the consciousness of gamers the world over.

Today, the humble point-and-click may not carry the same commercial weight as it did during the glory years of the late '80s and early '90s, but it continues to find a receptive and passionate audience. In Germany, where the distribution of violent video games has always been strictly controlled, point-and-click adventures have remained incredibly popular, and numerous companies have capitalised on the country's appetite for logic puzzles and item collecting. These include King Art Games, famous for *The Book of Unwritten Tales* (2011) and *The Raven: Legacy of a Master Thief* (2013), and Daedalic Entertainment, which was responsible for *The Whispered World* (2009) and *A New Beginning* (2010). Outside of Europe there are pockets of point-and-click resistance, emboldened by the arrival of indie publishing avenues on both PC and consoles. In 2006, New York native Dave Gilbert founded Wadjet Eye Games, and in the years since, the studio has published many games using the open-source Adventure Game Studio engine, including *The Shivah* (2006), *The Blackwell Legacy* (2006) and *Blackwell Epiphany* (2014). Tim Schafer's Double Fine Productions – the studio he founded after parting company with LucasArts – has recently remastered *Day of the Tentacle*, *Grim Fandango* and *Full Throttle* as well as producing *Broken Age* (2015), a point-and-click outing which used crowdfunding to raise its $3.45 million budget. Ron Gilbert, David Fox, Mark Ferrari and Gary Winnick joined forces to create 2017's *Thimbleweed Park*, which is perhaps as close to an old-school LucasArts adventure as we're ever likely to get. Meanwhile, Telltale Games has produced a series of episodic adventures based on properties as varied as *The Walking Dead*, *Batman*, *Sam & Max* and *Monkey Island*, helping these classic series to live on. Elsewhere, titles like *Machinarium*, *Fran Bow*, *The Lion's Song*, *Paradigm*, *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* and *The Darkside Detective* are fresh takes on the genre created by those who experienced the zenith of the point-and-click era from the perspective of wide-eyed players, and are now pushing the genre in new and exciting directions.

Modern-day adventures such as *Heavy Rain*, *Life is Strange* and *Beyond: Two Souls* owe a massive debt to point-and-click productions of yesteryear, too. So, despite falling from grace not so long ago, it would seem that the humble graphic adventure is finally back for good – even if the mouse and keyboard have perhaps been lost a little along the way.



The point-and-click genre is currently thriving with titles such as *Broken Sword 5*, *Thimbleweed Park* and *The Darkside Detective*.

Glossary

Point-and-click adventures consistently pushed the technology available. Because of this, some of the terms used in this book can get a little technical. Below are some useful explanations:

AGI
The Adventure Game Interpreter (AGI) engine developed by Sierra for early adventures like *King's Quest*, which allowed the use of a text parser and 16-colour EGA graphics.

Bitmap
A style of video game graphics that are built using a series of coloured dots called pixels.

CD-ROM
Optical media that can store large amounts of data, using the same technology as a music compact disc (CD).

CGA
A primitive PC graphics mode that allowed 16 colours on-screen.

CGI
Computer-generated imagery (CGI) is a term usually used to describe pre-rendered digital, rather than real-time imagery in a video game. It became more commonplace with the advent of CD-ROM.

Copy Protection
Came in various forms but the most popular were code wheels. Without one you couldn't access a pirated copy of the game.

Cutscene
A non-playable part of a game that is usually animated and used to advance the story. The term was coined by Ron Gilbert to describe a scene that cut away from the action in *Maniac Mansion*.

Dead End
When a player is stuck with no way of finishing the game due to making a incorrect choice or failing to pick up an object.

Deluxe Paint
Also known as DPaint – a bitmap graphics editor that became the standard for creating graphics and backgrounds for adventure games during the '90s.

Dialogue Tree
A series of alternate questions and answers used in adventure game conversations, which can become quite convoluted.

Digitise
The process of taking pictures or sound and converting them into a form that can be used on a computer. In the case of adventure games, digitising artwork involved scanning a physical drawing or painting then retouching it in an art package such as Deluxe Paint.

EGA
An early PC graphics mode, replacing CGA, that allowed 64 colours on-screen.

Engine
The software framework used to create and execute a game. In the point-and-click adventure genre examples include LucasArts' SCUMM and Sierra's SCI.

Feelies
The goodies that came inside a game box. Included items such as stickers, badges, T-shirts, comic books, posters, and even scratch-and-sniff cards.

Flöda
A suspicious lederhosen company based in the Amazon jungle.

Floppy Disk
3-inch floppy disks were the standard game media in early DOS, Amiga and Macintosh adventure games. Due to their limited storage, these were later replaced by CD-ROM.

Graphic Adventure
A genre of video game that includes point-and-click adventures like *Maniac Mansion* and *King's Quest*, but also text adventures with graphics like Scott Adam's *Questprobe* series and *The Hobbit*.

Hard Drive
A large internal or external storage system. Games on floppy disk could be installed to the hard drive to avoid tiresome swapping of multiple discs.

GLOSSARY

10

Insult Sword Fighting
A method of combat used by would-be pirates, utilising phrases like "You fight like a dairy farmer" and "How appropriate. You fight like a cow".

Inventory
An area of the game that stores items collected by the player, which in most point-and-click adventures were depicted by visual icons.

Menu
Typically a clickable area that, when selected, reveals a list of commands which can be selected and activated by the user.

Microwave
A piece of culinary technology in which you should definitely not place a hamster in *Maniac Mansion*.

MS-DOS
Microsoft Disk Operating System (MS-DOS) is an early operating system that was used in IBM PCs.

Noun
A word used to identify or name an object, person or place, e.g. stone, knight, castle.

Pointer
A movable on-screen graphic controlled by the mouse. It signals the area on the screen where the actions of the user take place.

Point-and-Click Interface
A graphical user interface employed by point-and-click adventures, enabling players to control their actions using the mouse, with little or no typing.

Rotoscoping
The technique of tracing the outlines of filmed human actors to create animation. Famously used in features like Disney's *Snow White*, but also in games such as *Broken Sword*.

RPG
Or role-playing game – a game in which a player takes on the role of a character, usually on a story-based quest or mission. Although the term applies to point-and-click adventures, it's more commonly associated with games such as *Ultima*, *Zelda*, and *Final Fantasy*.

Scanner
Digital scanners were used to convert painted backgrounds into digitised artwork for games like *Monkey Island 2* and *Simon the Sorcerer*.

SCI
Replacing AGI, Sierra's Creative Interpreter (SCI) engine allowed 256-colour VGA graphics, better animation and mouse support, starting with *King's Quest IV*.

SCUMM
Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion* (SCUMM) is a game scripting engine created by Lucasfilm Games' Ron Gilbert and Chip Morningstar, and used in nearly all of the LucasArts point-and-click adventures.

Talkie
Term used to describe a spoken soundtrack version of an adventure game.

Text Adventure
An adventure game that usually consisted of a simple text display and text parser, without any graphical representation of your environment. Examples include *Zork* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Text Parser
Early adventure games required the player to type commands into a parser which would respond to simple verb/noun combinations like 'go north' or 'take lamp'.

Third-Person Control System
A system where you see and control your character from the point of view of another person, and the method utilised by most 2D point-and-click adventures.

Tuna Head
Don't be one of these.

Vector Graphics
A way of creating graphics using real-time mathematical calculations to create the outlines of objects.

Verb
A word that conveys an action, e.g. talk, walk, take.

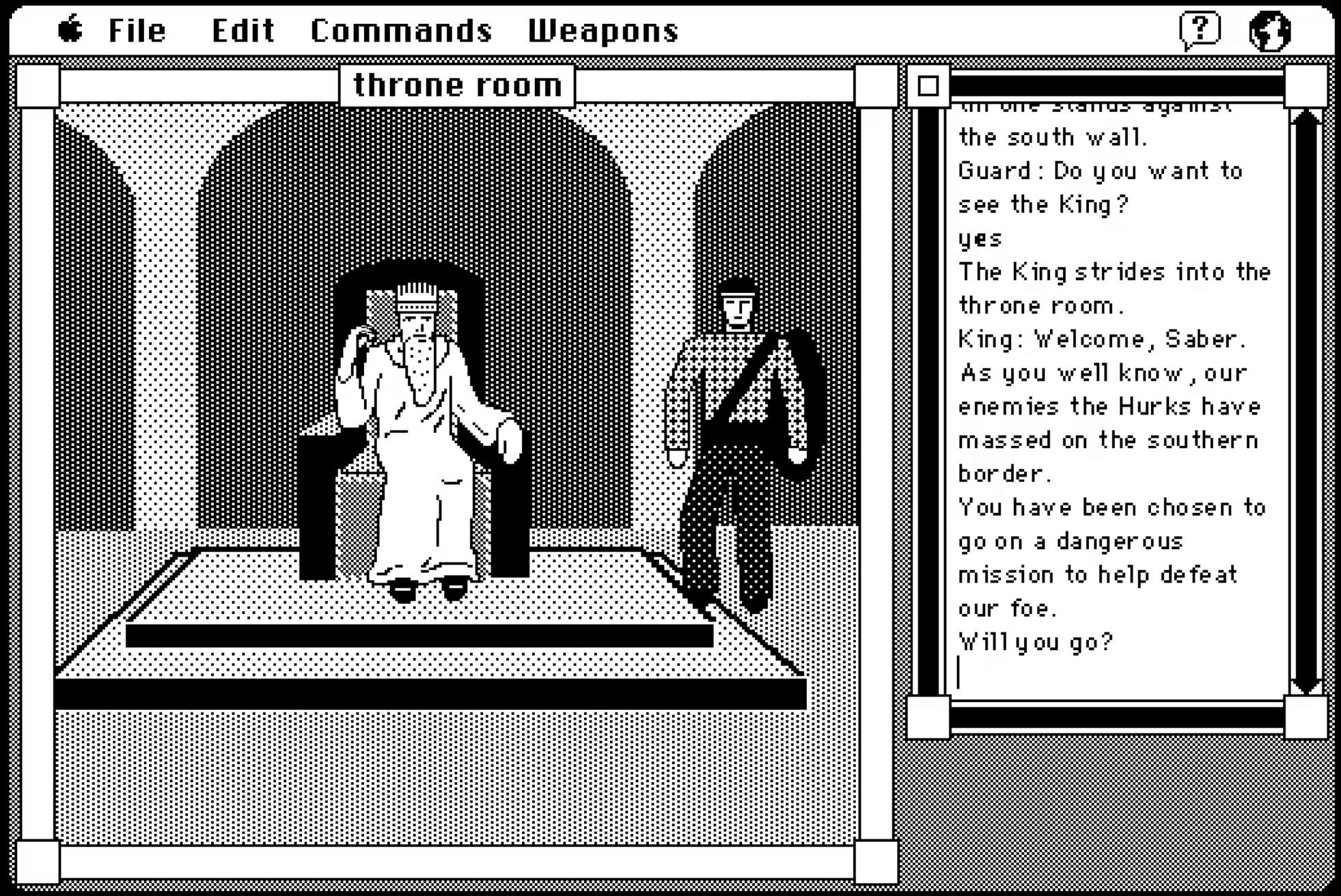
VGA
An extended PC graphics mode, replacing CGA and EGA, that allowed 256 colours on screen.

Virtual Theatre
A game engine developed by Revolution Software which allowed in-game characters to move around independently of the player.

Voxel Graphics
A graphics technique using 'volumetric pixels', essentially small cubes, producing highly detailed characters and environments.

1984

Enchanted Scepters
Famously credited as the first ever point-and-click adventure game, *Enchanted Scepters* by Silicon Beach Software was released for the Apple Macintosh in 1984. The game made great use of an innovative new invention – the mouse. Built using the World Builder game creation system, *Enchanted Scepters* was also the first Macintosh game to feature digitised sound.



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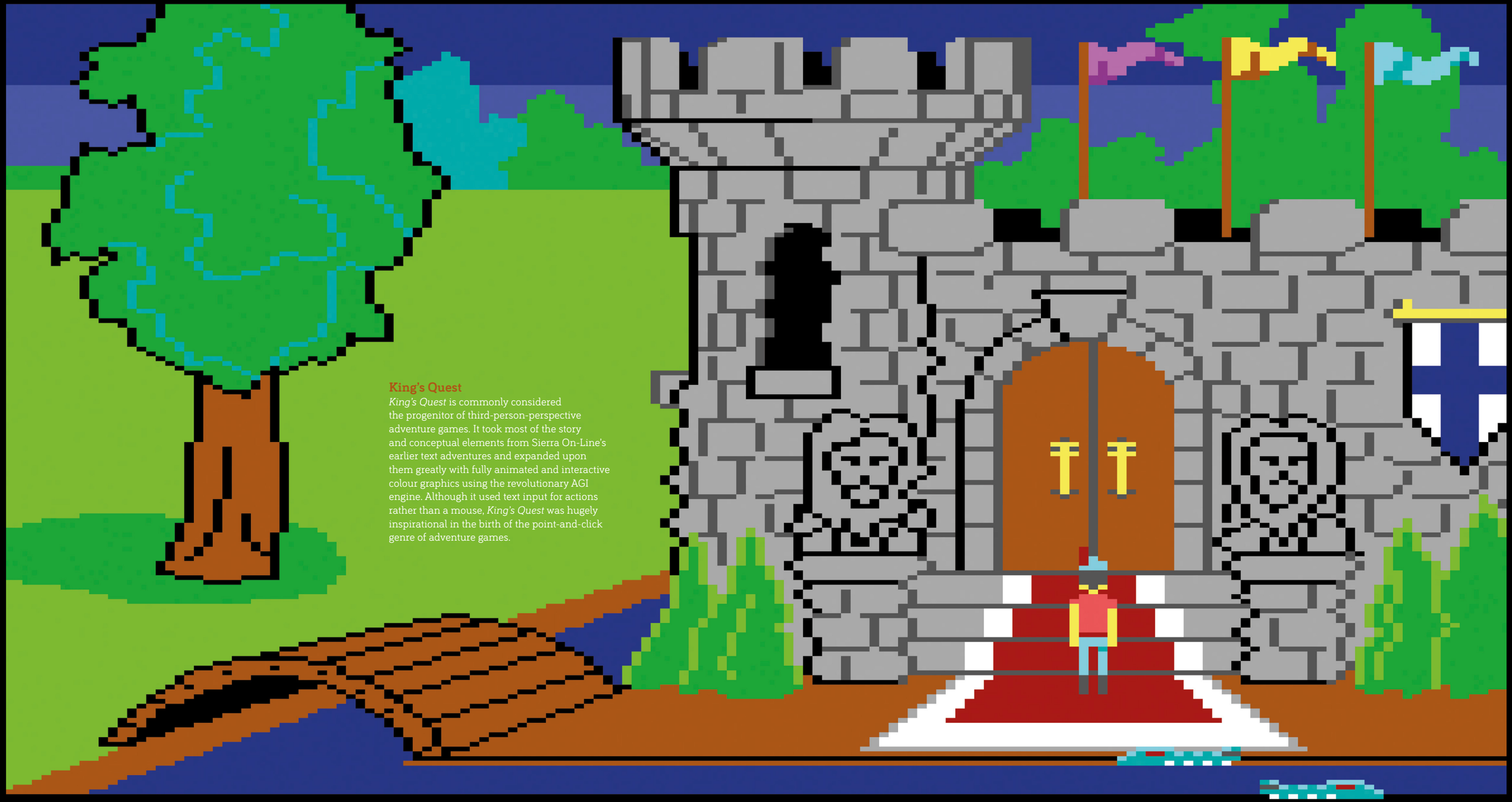
1984



King's Quest

King's Quest is commonly considered the progenitor of third-person-perspective adventure games. It took most of the story and conceptual elements from Sierra On-Line's earlier text adventures and expanded upon them greatly with fully animated and interactive colour graphics using the revolutionary AGI engine. Although it used text input for actions rather than a mouse, *King's Quest* was hugely inspirational in the birth of the point-and-click genre of adventure games.

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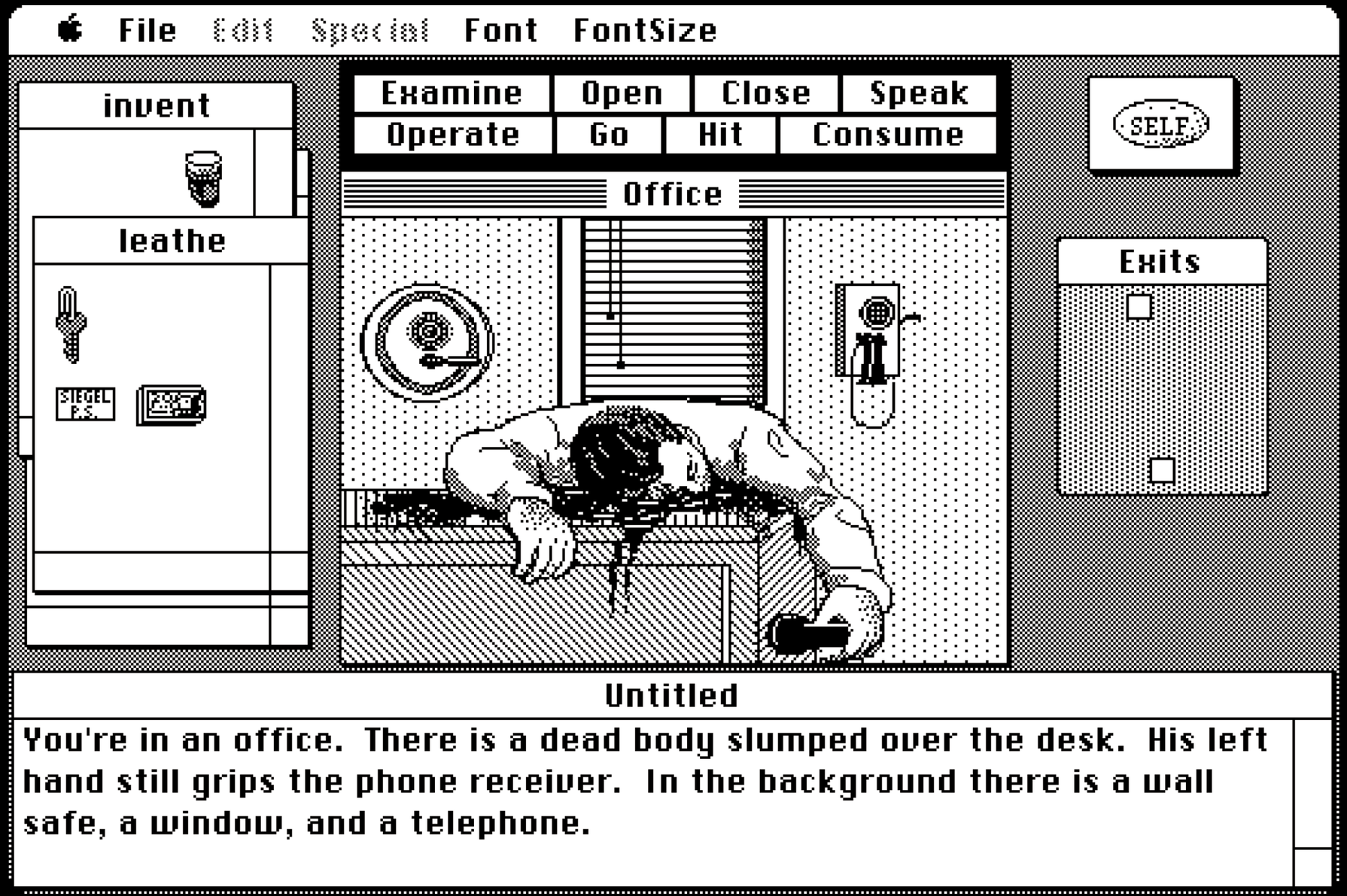
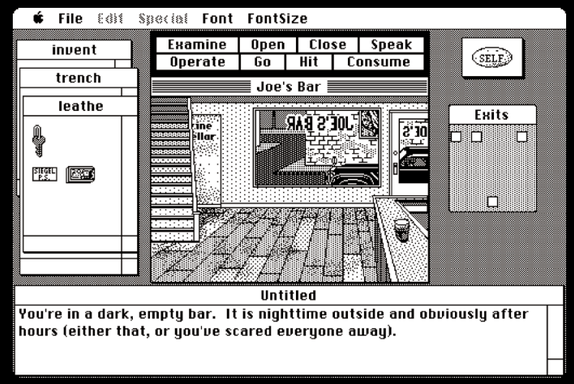
1985





Déjà Vu: A Nightmare Comes True!!
Inspired by the novels of Raymond Chandler and 1940's cinematic thrillers, *Déjà Vu* made great use of the Macintosh's mouse. ICOM Simulations realised it could use a menu-based interface to tell stories, where clicking on menu items would solve puzzles and advance the story. *Déjà Vu* became the first in a series to use the MacVenture game engine, and, as it didn't require a keyboard to play, ports to home consoles were possible, including a 1990 release for the Nintendo Entertainment System.

14

1985

King's Quest II: Romancing the Throne
As the new king of Daventry, King Graham is tasked with the rescue of Princess Valanice from her ivory crystal tower. The formula established in the original *King's Quest* is retained but expanded upon with a bigger story and even an opening cinematic cutscene. As is typical for Sierra's AGI games, players move their protagonist around with cursor keys and perform actions by typing commands. The in-game soundtrack includes music by Tchaikovsky, Bach and Michael Jackson.

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1986

Space Quest: Chapter I - The Sarien Encounter
After the success of *King's Quest II*, programmers Scott Murphy and Mark Crowe were keen to see if the AGI engine could work with other genres. Comedy and science fiction became the focus, and *Space Quest* was born. You control the janitor, Roger Wilco, on a mission to escape from the spaceship Arcada, which has fallen under the control of the evil Sariens. The innovative pseudo-3D environments allows characters to move in front of and behind background objects.

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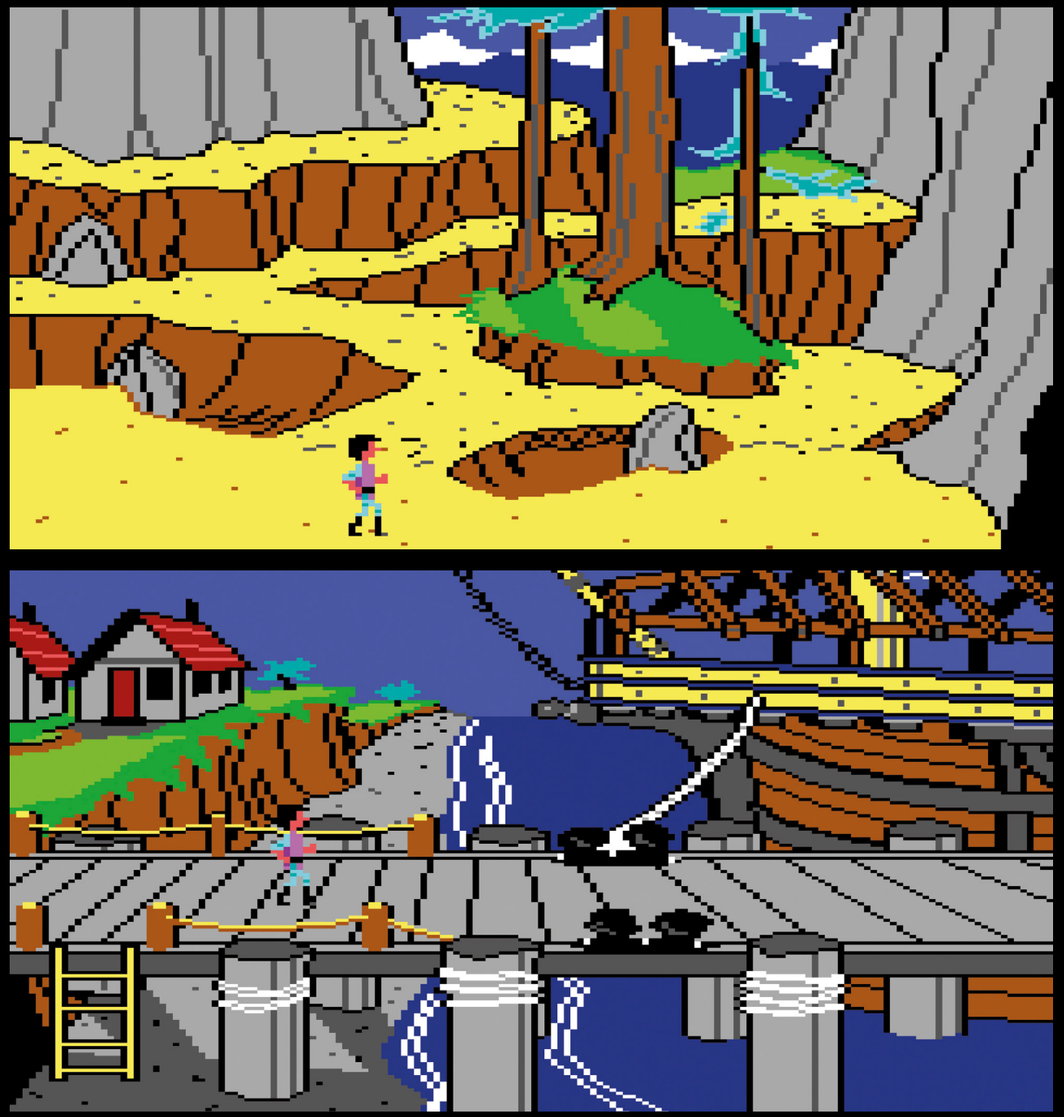
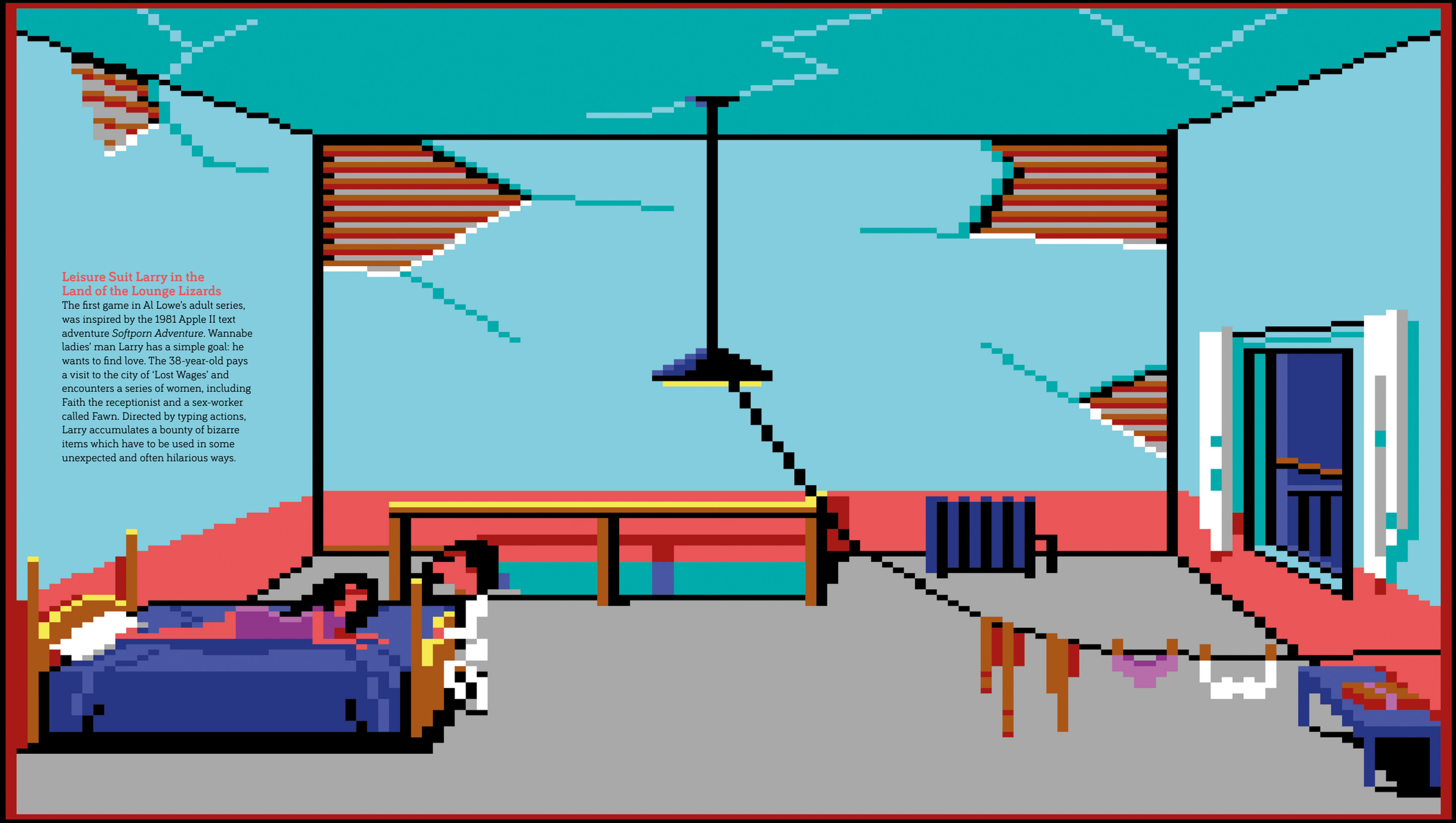


King's Quest III: To Heir is Human

The third *King's Quest* in the series stood out from its predecessors by introducing a new setting and a new lead character called Gwydion. Innovative features such as a fast travel system made navigating the world easier, and interconnected screens loop when the player reaches their edge. More collectible items and more complicated puzzles made this instalment a noticeably tougher challenge.

1987



Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards

The first game in Al Lowe's adult series, was inspired by the 1981 Apple II text adventure *Softporn Adventure*. Wannabe ladies' man Larry has a simple goal: he wants to find love. The 38-year-old pays a visit to the city of 'Lost Wages' and encounters a series of women, including Faith the receptionist and a sex-worker called Fawn. Directed by typing actions, Larry accumulates a bounty of bizarre items which have to be used in some unexpected and often hilarious ways.

18

Who has not been a
U. S. Attorney General?

a. John Mitchell
b. Sam Shepard
c. Ramsey Clark
d. Herbert Browner

"Let It Be" was recorded by

a. the Rolling Stones.
b. the Monkees.
c. Creedence Clearwater.
d. the Beatles.

Which is not a cheese?

a. Jarlsburg
b. Mozzarella
c. Brie
d. Reisling

VCR stands for

a. Very Confusing Record.
b. Visual Cartridge
Recording.
c. Very Complete Record.
d. Video Cassette Recorder.

Mohammed Ali is

a. a ballet star.
b. an Arab terrorist.
c. a professional boxer.
d. a singer.

Is this software pirated?

a. Yes.
b. I'm not talking.
c. No. (How could you
even ask!)
d. No, just borrowed.

▲ Before you can play *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*, you must get past this novel age-verification system, consisting of trivia questions that only adults would know the answers to!

1987

Maniac Mansion
A game-changing title that spawned the terminology 'point-and-click' because it was controlled entirely by the mouse or joystick. Designers Rob Gilbert and Gary Winnick were frustrated by text-driven adventures and wanted to push graphics to the forefront. *Maniac Mansion* was also the first game to include a series of action verbs, which set the standard for future point-and-click adventure games and was the first LucasArts adventure to use the (now legendary) SCUMM engine.

20

Ron Gilbert

One of the most influential figures ever to work in the point-and-click genre, Ron Gilbert began his career in 1983 while still a student, and joined Lucasfilm around the same time. With Gary Winnick he created the seminal *Maniac Mansion*, and would also work on the first two *Monkey Island* games – still regarded as genre classics to this very day. He departed the company to found Humongous Entertainment in 1992, and since then has held positions at Hothead Games, Telltale Games and Double Fine Productions, the latter of which was founded by fellow LucasArts alumni Tim Schafer. He recently reunited with Gary Winnick, David Fox and Mark Ferrari to create *Thimbleweed Park*, a spiritual successor to LucasArts' point-and-click adventures.

What are your earliest memories of computer-based adventure games?
When I was in college they had a big mainframe computer and all of us played *Adventure*, the original. I guess it wasn't *Colossal Cave*, so it wasn't the original original, but, you know. We played that all the time, so I was very aware of text adventures. I didn't really think about designing them... I didn't really think about their structure or anything like that, they were just fun little games that me and my friends played.

Can you tell us how you came to work at Lucasfilm Games (later LucasArts), and what it was like working there in the early days?
I had gotten my first job in the industry, at a company called Human Engineered Software. I created this program called Graphics BASIC, which enhanced the BASIC language on the Commodore 64, and I sent it to them to see if they wanted to publish it. They really liked it and they did publish it, and they also offered me a job. I quit college and moved to California and went to work for them. But I was only there about nine months before they went out of business, so I moved back home and was getting ready to go back to college again when I got a call from somebody at Lucasfilm. The head of Lucasfilm Games, Steve Arnold, was friends with one of the people who'd worked at HES and Lucasfilm was looking for a Commodore 64 programmer, so this guy had given Steve my name... And that's really how I got to work there. The first game I worked on was the Commodore 64 version of *Koronis Rift*, and I did the Commodore port of *Ballblazer*. I wasn't an actual employee of Lucasfilm at that point, I was just a contractor, and when those games were done I really wanted to keep working there. So I really needed to find a project because I was going to be laid off if I didn't find something to work on. I'd become good friends with Gary Winnick, so Gary and I just started batting around ideas for some kind of a game, and that's how *Maniac Mansion* came about.

***Maniac Mansion* is often cited as one of the games that pioneered the point-and-click adventure genre. What was the process behind its conception?**
When we started working on that, it wasn't an adventure. I don't know that we even really knew what kind of game it was. We were coming up with really funny characters – purple tentacles and green chemicals and all this other weird stuff – but we really had no idea what this game was. Then, during Christmas break, I visited my aunt and uncle who lived down in LA, and my cousin, who was eight at the time, was playing a game called *King's Quest*. I'd never seen it before, and it really kind of dawned on me while I was watching him play that this was what *Maniac Mansion* needed to be. When I got back, I said, "Okay... we need puzzles, we need all this kind of stuff", but I knew I didn't want a parser because I didn't like typing. It just seemed to me you should just click on the screen. One of the frustrations I had playing *King's Quest* was trying to figure out what the things on the screen were... I looked very closely at *King's Quest* and realised there were only about ten verbs in the whole game. So I condensed them down and put them up on the screen. David Fox had worked on a game called *Labyrinth* before *Maniac Mansion* that had verbs on a wheel that spun around. It wasn't a full leap to point-and-click yet, but I was definitely very inspired by the work I'd seen done on *Labyrinth* to come up with what I guess people would now call the SCUMM interface. That's kind of how *Maniac Mansion* went from a weird idea to becoming the first point-and-click adventure game.

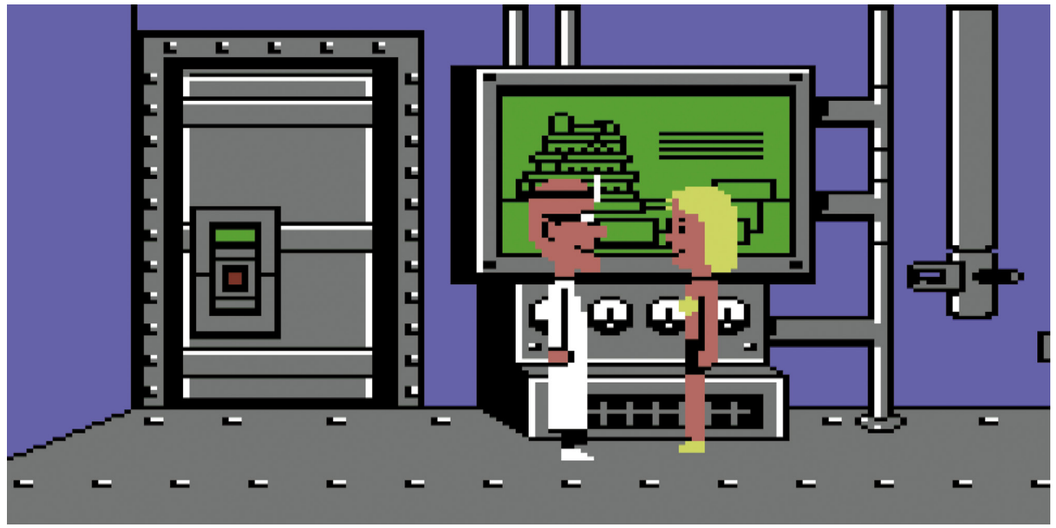
"I was definitely very inspired by the work I'd seen done on Labyrinth *to come up with what I guess people would now call the SCUMM interface."*

What were the inspirations behind the spoof sci-fi/horror movie feel of the game?
At the time, Gary and I were big fans of shitty B movies, like *Re-Animator*, and I remember there was a George Romero film called *Creepshow*, which had this this segment which actually starred Stephen King. He played a farmer, and it was about this meteor that fell in one of his fields, and he took it into the house and it emitted this slime, and it took him over. That's kind of where we got the idea for the meteor in *Maniac Mansion*. It was really a culmination of lots of weird ideas. *Little Shop of Horrors* had just come out, with the big talking plant, and that also made it into the game.

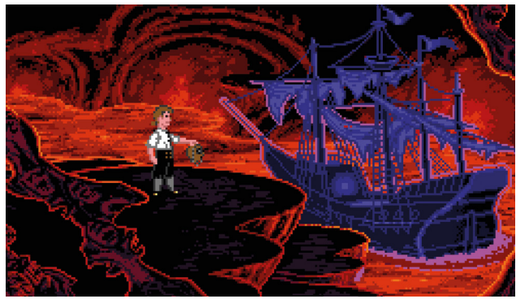
***Maniac Mansion* introduced the concept of switching between different playable characters, an idea that later resurfaced in *The Cave* and *Thimbleweed Park*. What made you decide to implement this feature?**
I think a lot of that goes back to the horror genre – the group of friends who go into a scary house – and it just seemed natural that you'd switch between them. Except that I had no idea how complicated that was, not just from an implementation standpoint, but from a design standpoint. That was one of those 'we were too stupid to know any better' moments. There's actually something really nice about it though; I think switching characters is really good in adventure games because you're going to get stuck in an adventure game, and if you can switch to another character, it allows you to free your brain for a second.

Was *Maniac Mansion* considered a successful title for Lucasfilm, enough so to keep producing further adventures?
It wasn't that successful. I think we kind of realistically looked at it and went, "You know what? This didn't really sell well, didn't really take off." And had we just said, "Alright, we're just not making any more adventure games," I think that would have been the end of it. The game would have died and ended up in the dusty archives of history, and no-one would remember it. But we kind of kept making them. David did *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, and Brian Moriarty came on and did *Loom*. I started *Monkey Island* and then stopped *Monkey Island* and did the *Indiana Jones* game and came back and did *Monkey Island*. It was a lot of those other games that really cemented the format.

On *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, did you have to follow the film plot, and did George Lucas keep an eye on development?
What was great about that was it followed the plot of the film but it didn't follow the plot of the film completely. What Noah Falstein wanted to do was say, "We're going to show you a bunch of scenes from the movie but we're also going to show you these scenes they didn't show." Those scenes probably happened because you may have heard about them briefly as a single sentence that Indy said, but it was really about building the kind of 'behind the scenes' of what was going on. George would come by once a year and check out what we were doing, but George was not a gamer. He was interested in this stuff because he saw it as a future. But Steven Spielberg was a huge gamer and, whenever he would come to visit George, he always had to come by and see what the Games Group was working on. So we would see Steven Spielberg more than we would see George Lucas. Because Spielberg had done the *Indiana Jones* movie, he came by at least two times to check out the game. He had a lot more involvement than George did, actually. My big recollection is of being in my office. Especially at Lucasfilm I was very used to famous people coming by and asking you to demo a game for them. So, you sit there and you play the game and they stand behind you and fake interest.



▲ Animated cutscene from *Maniac Mansion* featuring Sandy and her kidnapper Dr. Fred.



▲ Some classic scenes from *The Secret of Monkey Island* including the infamous three-headed Monkey!

But when Spielberg came by the first time, I showed him the game and he's wrestling the mouse out of my hand! He's like, "No, no. Let me have it." Shoving me! So I had a mouse fight with Steven Spielberg. That's kind of a big moment.

How did the concept for *The Secret of Monkey Island* come about?
I'd done *Maniac Mansion*, then I didn't directly work on *Zak McKracken*, but I was there building the SCUMM engine during that time. I was kind of just thinking of ideas for games. I think I was kind of frustrated that Sierra was doing so much better than we were. I kind of attributed some of that just to the fact that they were making fantasy games. And, you know, fantasy has always been hugely popular. I mean, it is today, with *Game of Thrones* and *Lord of the Rings*. But I don't like fantasy. I don't watch *Game of Thrones* or read fantasy literature; it's just not a genre that I enjoy. But I'd always really loved the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland, and the mood and feel of that. So, that's when I thought, "I'm going to build a pirate game." And then I just started writing little one-page stories about pirates and thinking of plots and so on. But nothing was really gelling inside my head; I had this good idea of pirates, but I wasn't really sure what to do with it. So, I kept thinking about *Monkey Island* all the way through building *Indiana Jones*. And then I read this book called *On Stranger Tides* by Tim Powers, and it had two qualities to it that I thought were really interesting. The first was that it was about pirates, but then there was all this voodoo and supernatural stuff.

How did you come up with the character, the endearingly hapless Guybrush Threepwood?
The lead character in *On Stranger Tides* was just a kind of fish out of water who got tossed into this adventure, and that really struck me. And the thing that I really started to think about with Guybrush was that his experience should mirror the experience of the player. So, that's when I said, "You know, Guybrush shouldn't be a pirate. He should be somebody who wants to be a pirate. Then he can learn at the same time as the player's learning." And that was the thing that the book really pushed me towards – not having the main character be an experienced pirate but a pirate wannabe. And at that point, the game really came together.

"I'd always really loved the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland, and the mood and feel of that. So, that's when I thought, 'I'm going to build a pirate game.' And then I just started writing little one-page stories about pirates and thinking of plots."

Famously, Guybrush got his name in a rather randomly humorous way. What about his nemesis, Captain LeChuck?
Yeah, when we started development I didn't really know what this character's name was, but I was having Steve Purcell do a lot of concept art for it and I would just call him 'guy'. He was just 'the guy'. And Steve Purcell was doing all this stuff inside of Deluxe Paint, and when you grab a little chunk of art in DPaint it's called a 'brush'.

▲ Guybrush's search for voodoo doll ingredients leaves him exposed in *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*.

▲ After getting lost on Dinky Island, Guybrush calls the LucasArts helpline in *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*.

So, what he would do was save all these files out on a floppy for me so that I could look at the concept art, and he would call them 'Guybrush' because they were the 'guy', and they were a DPaint brush. And so I spent probably about a month, just looking at Guybrush, Guybrush, Guybrush… So, in the end we said, "I think we should call him Guybrush." LeChuck definitely came from Chuck the plant. Steve Arnold, who ran the Games Group at the time, would sit in a lot of brainstorms with us. And any time we were talking about a name for a character, Steve would go, "Name him Chuck! We should name him Chuck!" And we'd all go, "Yeah, yeah, Steve, whatever…" And we'd come up with some other character and Steve would go, "Name him Chuck! You should name him Chuck!" So Gary and I called the plant in *Maniac Mansion* 'Chuck', as kind of a joke for Steve. And by the time *Monkey Island* came around, I was like "Oh, I'm just going to call him LeChuck", because having the 'Le' on there made it sound French and exotic.

***Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* marked a big advance in graphics. Was this due to new technology?**
The first game was finished and I went on a vacation for two weeks, then I came back and started working on *Monkey Island 2*. For the second game, artist Peter Chan came along and the very first version of Photoshop had just come out about that time. Scanners were around, but Photoshop 1.0 did not have the ability to take the millions of colours from scanned artwork and crunch it into 256 colours. Brad Taylor was working on the SCUMM system with myself and Aric Wilmunder, and he wrote this really good software that would take these scans of hand-drawn backgrounds and put them in Photoshop in millions of colours, then crunch them down to 240 colours – because we needed the other colours for the characters. Peter was drawing with markers and then scanning them with Brad's program, and that really preserved a lot of what he was doing. *Monkey Island 2* was a much bigger game, and when we worked on a game we were given a budget for the number of floppy disks we could have, because the cost of a physical box was enormous. That kind of went away when CD-ROM came out, but I think those restraints actually enhance creativity. Some people get upset because there's always constraints they have to work under, but sometimes they actually make things better. Although, with the number of islands – there's two in *The Secret of Monkey Island*, and in *Monkey Island 2* there's four – that was always the original number, I was never cutting that stuff down!

Do you have a favourite of the two *Monkey Island* games you worked on?
Well, people ask me, "What is better, [the first] *Monkey Island* or *Monkey Island 2*?" And to me, *Monkey Island* is a better designed game, but *Monkey Island 2* is a better game. If you look at the design on *The Secret of Monkey Island*, it's incredibly tight. Every puzzle in that game means something, and it flows and it's just perfect. But I think that *Monkey Island 2* is a more fun game because it's just a bigger world and it's a little more goofy. So, I don't think I have a favourite because I look at those games and like them for very different reasons.

"Well, people ask me, "What is better, [the first] Monkey Island *or* Monkey Island 2*?" And to me,* Monkey Island *is a better designed game, but* Monkey Island 2 *is a better game."*

You left LucasArts after *Monkey Island 2* and set up Humongous Entertainment to create graphic adventures like the *Freddi Fish* and *Putt Putt* series, aimed at a younger audience. Are you equally as proud of those games?
It's literally a 12-year span of my career that people just forget! I had so much fun making them and we were introducing kids to adventure games. These kids had never played adventure games before. A lot of them had never played games before. But we always said that what we were doing was building really good bedtime stories. Everybody that worked on those games did an amazing job, and I'm probably more proud of that work than I am of the stuff I did at LucasArts. I sold far more copies of *Putt Putt* than I ever did of *Monkey Island*. One of the things I get from a lot of fans when I meet them is, "Why did you leave Lucasfilm? You had this massive license you were working on. It was hugely successful and you just abandoned it." And I try to tell them, "No, see, that's not what happened… What happened was *The Secret of Monkey Island* went out, it was a mediocre sale, and *Monkey Island 2* came out and it really wasn't that much better." So it's not like I left this giant franchise; it really took at least, probably, three or four years to kind of become this kind of cult game.

▲ The *Putt-Putt* and *Freddi Fish* series of adventure games were aimed at a younger audience than Ron's previous work.

You recently returned to the point-and-click genre with *Thimbleweed Park*, a game that pays homage to the golden era of LucasArts games. What drew you back?
I actually had done two games before that. One was *DeathSpank*, which was kind of an RPG, but it had a lot of adventure game elements to it. And there was *The Cave*, which was a platform-type game, but also had a lot of adventure game elements to it. I think I've always been interested in the way adventure games tell stories, and the way adventure games do puzzles. *Thimbleweed Park* stemmed from a conversation that Gary Winnick and I were having; we were just talking about the old Lucasfilm games, and how they were very charming and interesting, and how few people had been able to replicate that. And we had David Fox doing programming, and Mark Ferrari doing the art, which was very *Maniac Mansion* inspired, just to see whether we could kind of recapture the charm of those old adventure games.

Did the inspiration for Thimbleweed Park come from a similar place as *Maniac Mansion*, channelling pulp fiction and contemporary TV shows, like The X-Files?
The thing is that *Thimbleweed Park* is not inspired by or even a reference to The *X-Files* – it's very much inspired by *Twin Peaks* and *True Detective*, shows like that. Even though we had this male and female FBI agent, Gary and I never once thought of The *X-Files*. But if I had thought about it, I probably would have made the characters a little bit different, so they didn't remind you so much of Mulder and Scully.

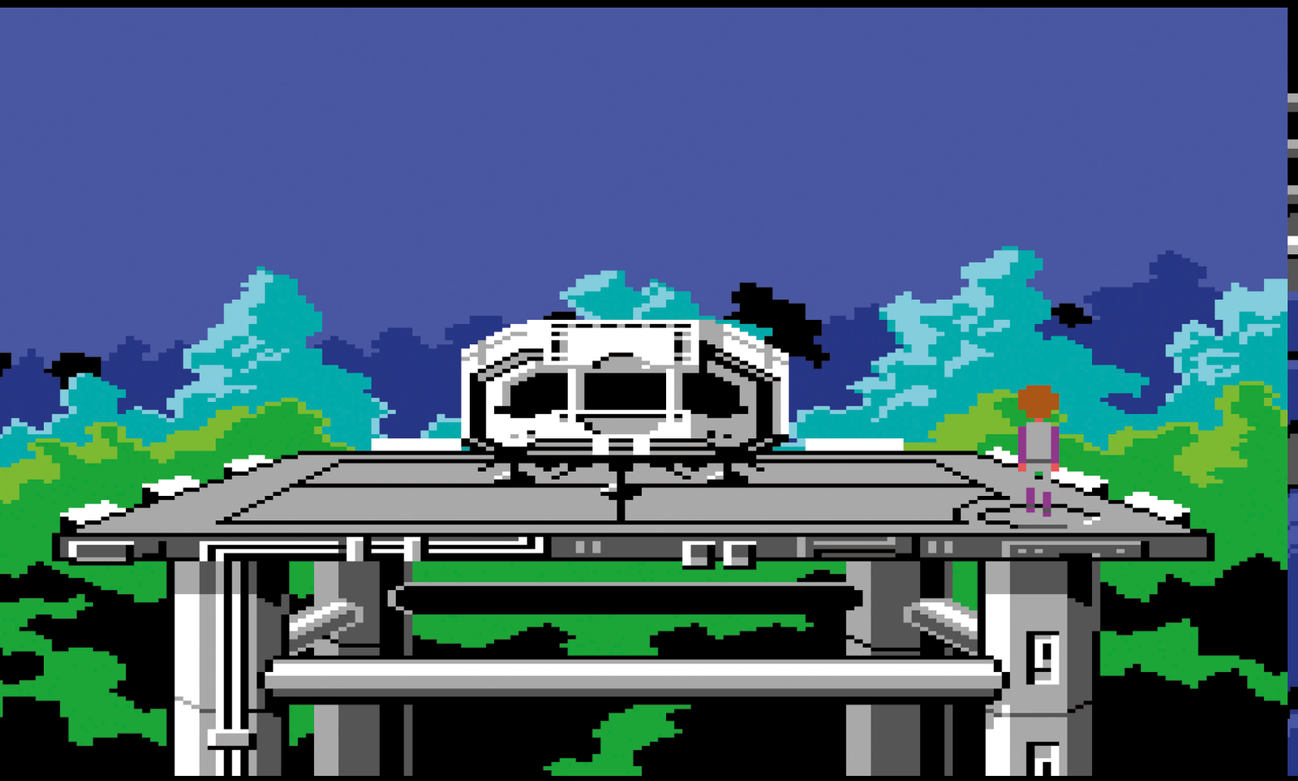
Was it a similar process designing a point-and-click adventure in 2016 as it was designing *Maniac Mansion* back in 1987?
It was shockingly similar! But I think we kind of did that on purpose. Gary and I had built games, David and I had built games. We knew how we built those old games, and we really tried to build this game exactly like we built those. I think people do have a lot of nostalgia for them, and I think a lot of it is the nostalgia for the LucasArts games, or the Sierra games, that they were eight years old when they were playing. So they remember those games through the eyes of an eight-year-old. And they were long, and they were hard, and I think you always kind of look at stuff nostalgically differently. We'd always said with *Thimbleweed Park*, "We don't want to build a game like those old LucasArts games; we want to build a game like you remember those old LucasArts games."

"If I had thought about it, I probably would have made the characters a little bit different, so they didn't remind you so much of Mulder and Scully."

Would you consider working on another point-and-click adventure game in the future, maybe even one with the words 'Monkey' and 'Island' in the title?
Well, here's the thing – I don't own *Monkey Island*, Disney owns it, and Disney doesn't want to sell it. I have people who would give me money to buy *Monkey Island* back, that's not an issue. But nothing's going to help that problem except Disney maybe losing interest in it, or somebody at some point in the future going, "What the hell is this *Monkey Island* thing and why is it clogging up our warehouse?!" And, you know, that's the point where you might be able to opportunistically jump in and buy it, but I think that's a long way off because right now they're just not interested in selling. It's frustrating for me, but yeah, I would love to make my version of *Monkey Island 3*; I think that would be a really fun project to work on.

▲ Funded through Kickstarter in 2014, *Thimbleweed Park* pays homage to classic LucasArts adventure games.

1987



Space Quest II: Chapter II - Vohaul's Revenge
As the first game was called Chapter I, a sequel to *Space Quest* was inevitable. For the second game in Sierra's amusing series, it's a case of more of the same. Much of the gameplay is dedicated to avoiding the many environmental traps, designed to kill the lead character, Roger Wilco, in humorous ways. *Space Quest II* was also hard drive installable, a revelation for the genre.

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1987

Police Quest: In Pursuit of the Death Angel
In *Police Quest*, you control Sonny Bonds, an officer with the Lytton Police Department. Using the then-standard AGI engine, *Police Quest* resembled other early Sierra games but is differentiated by a focus on realism. The first three games in the series were designed by former police officer Jim Walls, so puzzles are solved following authentic police procedure, while travel between locations is player controlled, adding an action element.

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Jim Walls

Jim Walls' route into games design has to rank as one of the most unorthodox ever recorded. He joined the California Highway Patrol in 1971 and served until 1986, when he met Sierra co-founder Ken Williams through a mutual acquaintance. Williams wanted Walls to write an adventure game series focused on crime-fighting; the result was *Police Quest: In Pursuit of the Death Angel*, which was followed by *Police Quest II: The Vengeance*, and *Police Quest III: The Kindred* – perhaps Walls' best-known work during his time with the company. He also designed *Blue Force* – a title that was thematically similar to *Police Quest* – at Tsunami Games. Since leaving Sierra he has contributed to games such as *Blade Runner*, *Earth & Beyond* and *Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat*.

What's the story behind how you made the unlikely career change from California Highway Patrol officer to designing a series of police-themed adventure games for Sierra?
I was living in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in California, a little town called Coarsegold. I was working the patrol in a little valley town just below where I lived when I got into a shootout with a guy down there, a parolee who didn't want to go back to jail. I worked for about a year after that, and then things started happening to me psychologically. I would get extremely exhausted while I was driving the patrol car, to the point where I was literally falling asleep at the wheel. And I was having these anxiety attacks at night. So I was given a period of evaluation and taken off the job. At that time my wife was a hairdresser, and her shop was in Oakhurst, where Sierra On-Line was based. Ken Williams, the founder of Sierra, was one of her clients; he'd come in every now and then for a haircut. One day, they got to talking about me and my current situation. I guess Ken, at that particular time, was thinking of doing another adventure series, based on police work, and he wanted a police officer to be involved. So, he took the opportunity to invite me up to his house. We played a few rounds of racquetball, then went up to his game room and had a couple beers. He wondered if I could write a little story, four or five pages about my experiences, and that's how we started off.

And that story became the basis for the first *Police Quest* adventure?
Yes. Ken talked me into expanding on that little five-page deal, making it more detailed, which I did until we had a story that you could pretty much break into the different scenes of the game.

"I was working the patrol in a little valley town just below where I lived when I got into a shootout with a guy down there, a parolee who didn't want to go back to jail."

Did you have much knowledge of or experience with computers at that point?
I didn't really have any experience at all. During my career in the Highway Patrol, all we'd had in our office for communication were teletype machines, and that's how we'd get what was going on around the state. In fact, Ken had to point out the ON/OFF switch of the thing – that's how ignorant I was with computers! So it was whole a new world for me.

Did you have any worries about leaving your police job to design computer games?
Well, when I met Ken I was still going through a process called '4800 Time', basically on a disability allowance. And it was looking like they were going to retire me out, because on the Highway Patrol, you have to be full-blown ready to work out on the road; you can't just go and get a desk job in an office. I'd taken some aptitude tests, and it looked like I was going to go into electronics. Ken really wanted me to come in and work with him, but I didn't know if I could make any money doing that. And he said, "I guarantee you'll make more money than you'll ever make as an electronics guy."

How did you find working at Sierra On-Line?
I wasn't on the payroll, so I could come and go as I pleased. I always liked going to work early in the morning – that was my best time, and then shutting it down around three o'clock in the afternoon. You'd see Ken and Roberta Williams daily, and they were really nice people. Sierra was a fun place with very much a family atmosphere in those days.

"As for the name, I had a map of the North American continent, and I just closed my eyes and stuck my finger out and hit the map. And there it was – a little town in Canada called Lytton. So that's the name we used."

Was the precinct of Lytton in *Police Quest* based on anywhere particular?
I kind of designed the town after the city of Fresno, which is in central California, in the valley. The map that came with the game that shows the city is based after Fresno as far as some of the street names, and the freeway that goes through it. As for the name, I had a map of the North American continent, and I just closed my eyes and stuck my finger out and hit the map. And there it was – a little town in Canada called Lytton. So that's the name we used.

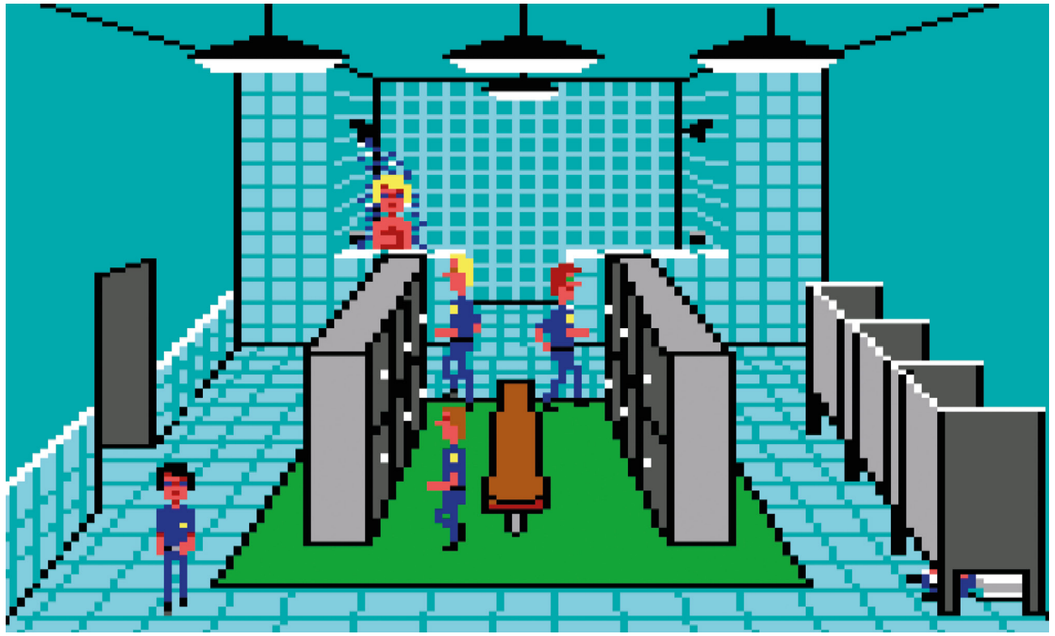
As well as your own experiences, were you influenced by crime literature or TV for the storylines and Sonny Bonds' character?
Of course, a lot of what happened to me went into that character. That's basically what I knew, running high-speed pursuits, and we did many felony arrests... people wanted for murder, people wanted for armed robberies, people wanted for auto-theft, things like that, because that all winds up out on the highway. I also read a bunch of books by Joseph Wambaugh. And cop TV shows... well that's all I ever watched. *The Streets of San Francisco*. And *Dragnet*. That's an old one I used to watch all the time.

A homage to the *Dragnet* title sequence makes an appearance on the introductory screens of the *Police Quest* games...
Well, I think in *Police Quest III*, it was from a friend of mine that lived near me, who was retired from the LAPD. And I used his badge [on the title screen]. Actually, when Marie Bonds gets attacked and you go to the scene, there's a bronze star lying there. That was modelled on the Bronze Star awarded to my father during World War II.

Did Al Lowe, the creator of *Leisure Suit Larry*, also help out on *Police Quest*?
Yes. On that first game, we were running behind. I'd been assigned one programmer, and it was probably just too much for only one person. So they brought Al in to kind of clean up the code. We worked at his house in Fresno – he had his laundry room converted into a little office – and we worked down there till the wee hours of the morning. That was an experience in itself right there... Al's a character, man! The guy would keep me in stitches, you know, constantly telling jokes, and doing little things to try and keep me awake. And I don't know if you remember, but in *Police Quest II*, when you had to fly to Steelton, when you walk up the stairs to board the plane, if you go to the right there's some seats where people are sitting. And there's Larry Laffer sitting there. That was kind of a little joke we threw in.

How closely did you work with the artists?
Mark Crowe (*Space Quest*) had his hands in it quite a bit from the beginning, and he worked quite a bit on *Police Quest III*. We were in the same office together. I think

▲ Sonny leaves Lytton Police Department in *Police Quest: In Pursuit of the Death Angel*.



▲ Sonny must first prepare for the morning briefing in *Police Quest: In Pursuit of the Death Angel*.

to start with he kind of wondered about bringing in a cop that knew nothing about this kind of stuff, you know. A lot of people asked that question! But he was a good guy, and we became good friends. As far as the art goes, we just divided the games up into the scenes or divided the story into the scenes of the game. We'd do a little storyboard and then draw these little stick figures. Of course, because I'd been in the police, when they were doing the police department with all the squad rooms, all I did was tell them what ought to be in there, and then the artists took care of the rest.

Can you tell us a few of your real-life experiences as a police officer that made it into the games?
Well, that chicken on the desk in Sergeant Dooley's office [in *Police Quest*] – that really happened. We had one officer that was pretty much a rebel, and hated the lieutenant. And in that area there was a lot of truck traffic coming through on the Interstate 5, hauling cattle, hauling chickens, hauling all kinds of things. So I guess this chicken fell off a chicken truck. And someone, probably that one officer, got this chicken and took it into the lieutenant's office when he was out, and taped its legs to the top of his desk. So, when they discovered it, there was chicken crap and feathers everywhere. As you can imagine, that caused one hell of an uproar from higher up the command chain!

"As far as the art goes, we just divided the games up into the scenes or divided the story into the scenes of the game. We'd do a little storyboard and then draw these little stick figures."

Then there was an instance when I was working in the coastal mountain range area called The Grapevine, and we got a radio call about a body floating down the California Aqueduct that ran close to the freeway. I figured this guy's going to come out of the end of the aqueduct into the lake, so I went down and there was a big crowd of people, so I asked if anyone had spotted a body. Somebody said, "Well there's a body, but he's not dead." At that time there was an embankment that went down into the lake and suddenly this guy comes up over the embankment, and he's stark naked. When you go down that aqueduct, before it reaches the lake there's 1,700 feet of siphoned tube it goes through. This guy went through all that. So my first thought was that, because the aqueduct is structured out of concrete and the water's swift, he'd had his clothes ripped off. He comes up to the driver's window and I tell him to get in the back seat, and I'll get a blanket to put on him. And he uses a whole lot of four-letter words on me, reaches through the window, rips my badge off, and throws it in the lake. So I start chasing him down the embankment into the water! Anyway, I had more adrenaline going than he had drugs in him, so I arrested him. But I think in *Police Quest II*, you scuba dive looking for a body. And while you're scuba diving, you find a police badge... And then that whole scene ended up in *Police Quest III*. Obviously, the shootout at the end of the first game with the bad guy, Jesse Baines, was based on my shootout incident, too.

▲ Developed using the SCI engine, *Police Quest II: The Vengeance* boasted more detailed graphics and animation.

Police Quest III: The Kindred, which featured a full point-and-click interface, was the last entry Jim worked on in the series.

JIM WALLS INTERVIEW

Whose idea was it for you to appear as yourself in the games, as a sort of mentor to players?
That was fun. It was Ken's idea, to have me appear when the player killed themselves off [and offer advice]. It was a whole new experience for me, really. I remember when we were promoting *Police Quest III* we had a little demo of the game and we took it across the country. There was the HQ of a police magazine in Detroit called something like *Police Beat* we took it to. When the issue came out there was an article about a police sergeant that had had all his traffic guys come in and play it.

Were you mindful about being faithful to police regulations and procedures?
Well yes, to a degree you had to do it by the book, but it's funny you should mention that because we had the 'police indoctrination guide' that came with the first game, which was kind of a joke, because the initials were P-I-G!

Did Ken's promise work out for you regarding earnings on the *Police Quest* series and your other work at Sierra?
Oh God, yes… Ken wanted to pay me in royalties, and I was worried about paying the bills, so he told me that he would give me royalty advances. And that whenever a game shipped, and the receipts started coming in from the sales, I could pay him back. So at first we did that, and then I had royalties on *Police Quest II*, and *Code-Name Iceman*, and then *Police Quest III*. By that time, when the royalties were coming in, you can figure it out yourself… I mean, I was absolutely amazed. I thought, "I can't believe that I'm getting this kind of money for what I'm doing."

"It was Ken's idea, to have me appear when the player killed themselves off [and offer advice]. It was a whole new experience for me, really. I remember when we were promoting Police Quest III *we had a little demo of the game and we took it across the country."*

Do you have a favourite of the three *Police Quest* games that you were involved in?
Story-wise, maybe *Police Quest II*. But I think going by looks and the ease of the point-and-click interface, probably *Police Quest III*. That was probably the nicest and easiest to get around. I much preferred using the mouse versus the parser; compared to the first game, it was like going from a Model T Ford to a Maserati! We were always on the cutting edge of technology, I think, at Sierra.

Can you tell us about *Blue Force*, the point-and-click adventure game you produced after *Police Quest III*?
For that game, I went with a company called Tsunami, which I would say was about 90 per cent former Sierra On-Line employees. It's kind of hard to nail it down, but I think the grass was greener on the other side. Sierra was more like a family-oriented place, and then became more structured, with too many fingers in on the deal-making decisions. I was kind of starting to dislike that a little bit. Then, right at the end of *Police Quest III*, Tsunami started up. So that's part of the reason why I went over there. *Blue Force* was another police game, where you started out as a motorcycle officer. We actually shipped that game; I don't think it did very well though.

What was your involvement in Westwood's *Blade Runner* adventure?
When I worked for Sierra On-Line, Louis Castle (one of the founders of Westwood) visited and Ken took him on a tour and introduced me to him. Then, after Tsunami went down, I was just kind of doing nothing. I bartended for a while, and I was still getting royalties from *Police Quest*, but I was too young to quit, and I was hustling a game design around several software companies in the LA area. And then I went to Las Vegas, because I remembered Louis Castle. He wasn't really interested in my pitch, but he wanted me to consider coming on board for *Blade Runner*, to put some sort of police touch to it. Westwood had a little company townhouse close to their office, and they put me up there while we were working on *Blade Runner*. That thing was mesmerising to me! It just drew you right into that world. I worked with David Leary, who was the main designer. And after that I did a game called *Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat*, which was a lot of fun. I read a lot about pirates. I've got a pirate theme in my home right now.

What was the idea behind *Precinct*, your proposed spiritual successor to *Police Quest*, which you attempted to raise funding for in 2013?
I think that if you'd brought *Police Quest* forward into today's time, that would have been *Precinct*. I wanted all the new bells and whistles, and I also wanted to develop a really nice driving interface, unlike the first *Police Quest*, which was kind of like ants crawling around the screen. Unfortunately, we didn't get enough to reach our mark, and it kind of hit a dead end and fizzled out, so we had the drop the project.

Did the *Precinct* project put you in touch with a lot of fans of your *Police Quest* adventures?
I was just amazed at the fan base that was still out there. Actually, even when we were doing the *Police Quest* games, I was overwhelmed with fan letters coming into the Sierra On-Line building. I spent a lot of time just answering them. But there were kids that were just so excited and they'd give you ideas – what would happen if Sweet Cheeks did this or that, you know? I mean, they were just really into it.

That must have been an extremely gratifying reward for all your work on the *Police Quest* series?
It was, especially the ones who'd write to you and tell you that they wanted to grow up and become police officers. And some of them did! In fact, on *Precinct*, one guy wrote to me saying he had grown up playing *Police Quest*, and wanted to help design the new game with me. He ended up becoming a Detroit PD officer.

There can't be that many game designers who have had a hit adventure game series as well as performed the Pursuit Intervention Technique manoeuvre to forcibly bring a suspect's car to a halt…
That's a thrill. Being able to do that, that's one of the biggest thrills I've ever had on a patrol. I mean, it would be nice to bring it into play for someone to experience. If you could combine a really good driving interface with the adventure game aspect, that would be tremendous, I think. That's what I always wanted to do, even in the beginning, but of course the technology wasn't there. But I still have everything we worked on for *Precinct*. I could pick it up anytime, and I think maybe it could be the game I always wanted *Police Quest* to be…

1988

King's Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella

Not only was this the first game in the *King's Quest* series to have a female protagonist, it was also the first instalment to use the Sierra Creative Interpreter (SCI) engine. This big step forward supported much improved 320×200 graphics with 16 colours and more detailed animation. *King's Quest IV* was also the first Sierra title with a full musical soundtrack, scored on the Roland MT-32. An AGI version was also released to cater for all PC hardware.

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Jeff Stephenson

As one of Sierra's earliest employees, Jeff Stephenson had a hand in many of the company's defining '80s hits, although his role wasn't focused on game design or artwork. Instead, he's famous for crafting the Sierra Creative Interpreter, a game engine which evolved from the earlier Adventure Game Interpreter used in *King's Quest*, the company's breakthrough smash hit. Since leaving Sierra in 1992, Stephenson has worked at companies such as Da Vinci Systems and Microsoft, and is currently senior staff engineer at Qualcomm Technologies, one of the world leaders in the production of semiconductor and telecommunications equipment.

How did you get your job at Sierra?
My wife Avis (at that point my girlfriend) and I had been working at Software Arts, the inventors of VisiCalc, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but decided we really needed to get out of the city. As it turned out, my parents owned a cabin that my grandfather had built in Coarsegold, California, so we decided to move there. The assumption was that we'd find some sort of work, and since we'd seen ads for Sierra's *Softporn Adventure* in issues of *InfoWorld*, we knew that there was actually a software company in Coarsegold. I expected to end up having to work 'down the mountain' in Fresno, but once we were there I sent my résumé to Sierra anyway. On the day of the interview, I wore a pair of nice jeans, a sports shirt, and boat shoes – Avis was worried that I was horribly underdressed, but I assured her that this was 'programmer clothing'. I was, as it turned out, overdressed. In any case, Ken Williams wanted to hire me but said he wasn't sure he could afford to. I ended up taking a cut to two-thirds the salary I'd had at Software Arts.

What was your role at Sierra in the early days?
My first job at Sierra was getting Roberta Williams' adventure game *Time Zone* to work. This was targeted to the Apple II, and was 'almost done' – except that all that was really done was that the artwork had been drawn and the story programmed. The glitch was that it was going to take seven floppies to hold all of this, and nobody had done any work to make it possible to move from room to room across multiple disks. I had to learn how the adventure game engine worked and then come up with a catalogue that correlated which rooms were on which disk and prompted for the relevant disk if it was not already loaded. As I got this working, we discovered how not-ready the actual game was – artwork was associated with the wrong rooms, the story didn't really flow the way it was supposed to, and so on. This was all made more difficult by the fact that the 'development machines' we programmed on got repurposed as 'production machines' to copy disks during the night shift, so every day started by trying to pull together a machine to work on.

You're often credited with creating the Adventure Game Interpreter (AGI) engine, which was first used in *the original King's Quest*. Is this actually the case?
Actually, it's a (clearly) common misconception that I was involved in creating AGI – while I was in the same room as the folks that did, I was working on a completely different project. What happened is that IBM approached Sierra about creating an adventure game for their PCjr that would show off its capabilities. Ken Williams and I flew out to Boca Raton to pitch them on the idea of a game in which characters moved around the screen rather than just having a static picture for each room. IBM was interested in that, but over a drink after the meeting, Ken and I started talking about creating a word processor targeted to the home audience. The idea was to have menus and icons replace markup commands as a means of formatting, and to display a thumbnail view of the document in the lower right corner with one pixel representing each character, allowing the user to have a concept of what the page looked like. Over the next week I did a mock-up in BASIC, we pitched it to IBM, and they agreed to include it in the launch of the PCjr. So while a team of folks were working on AGI and *King's Quest*, I was in the same room leading a team writing HomeWord.

Can you tell us how the Sierra Creative Interpreter (SCI) project then came about?
I never really liked the AGI engine – the game development language and the engine itself were clunky and limiting. Since I was one of the primary maintainers of it (the AGI development team was gone), I was always eager to redo it. The justification to do so (Ken would never accept a rewrite because it was 'clunky') came when monitors started to move to higher resolutions – AGI's one-byte coordinates (which limited resolution to 256 pixels in each direction) weren't able to deal with locations on such screens, which meant that it needed to be rewritten.

Was the creation of SCI a reaction to LucasArt's SCUMM engine?
No. I've never been a gamer, and I didn't follow the game industry; I had no idea what other companies were doing. What I was interested in were programming languages, and at the time I was learning about object-oriented programming. I wanted to turn the clunky AGI engine into a more general-purpose, object-oriented system.

SCI enabled more colours, high-resolution graphics, improved sound and a more interactive control system. Was it a challenge to create?
Yes, but not because of the colours, higher resolution, or sound – that part was pretty straightforward. The challenge for me was developing the object-oriented language, compiler and interpreter that allowed games to be written in a more modern (and powerful) way. I pulled concepts from a variety of different programming languages to do this – it was challenging and lots of fun.

Did you see an advance in the games that started using the SCI engine?
Definitely. A more general-purpose programming language allowed game developers to start doing things what weren't pre-defined in the sets of commands that the AGI development system had used – they could write their own behaviours in the language itself, rather than needing to change the game engine.

How did it feel to see a series of very successful games all created using your SCI engine?
It was really great. As game developers started to learn what they could do with SCI, I was constantly hit with 'Oh wow – I never thought of that!' moments in which a developer did something in a game that we never designed for, but because it was a general-purpose development system they could write it themselves. More than anything I'm a tool-maker, and I really love seeing people doing neat things I'd never thought of with tools I developed.

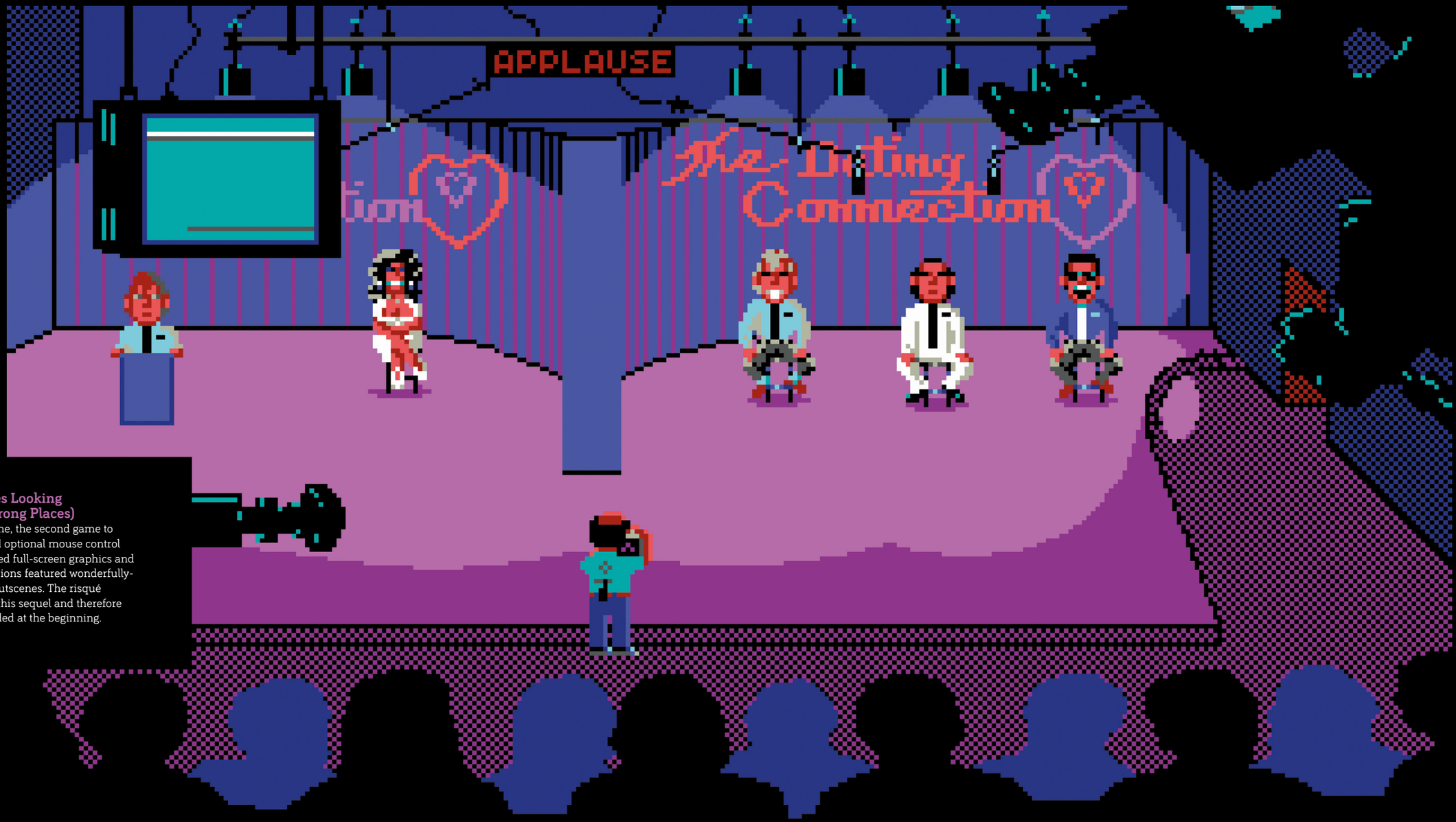
"As game developers started to learn what they could do with SCI, I was constantly hit with "Oh wow – I never thought of that!" moments in which a developer did something in a game that we never designed for, but because it was a general-purpose development system they could write it themselves."

Did you have any involvement in the game development process?
Not in the actual games themselves, though I did write specialised SCI code that was used in the games. One piece I remember in particular was a 'follower' algorithm that could be attached to a character to have it follow (or try to catch) another character. The challenging part of this was working out how the 'follower' would get around objects that were in its way without knowing anything about those objects. The code was written entirely in the SCI language with no modifications to the game engine.

From your time at Sierra, which aspects are you most proud of?
The development of the SCI development system and its eventual use in developing what at the time was The Sierra Network (TSN). TSN was, to my knowledge, the first commercial online graphic gaming network; you could log onto TSN, invite another logged-in user to play a board game, and chat with them in a chat window below the board on your screen while you were playing.

▲ *King's Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella* was the first Sierra game to use Jeff's new SCI engine.

1988



Leisure Suit Larry Goes Looking for Love (in Several Wrong Places)

Thanks to the new SCI engine, the second game to feature Larry Laffer featured optional mouse control for movement, with improved full-screen graphics and animation; the various locations featured wonderfully-detailed backgrounds and cutscenes. The risqué humour was pared back in this sequel and therefore no age verification was needed at the beginning.

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Police Quest II: The Vengeance

The sequel to *Police Quest* was built using Sierra's SCI engine, which meant that the graphics were more vibrant and detailed than in the first game. As before, directional keys control detective Sonny Bonds, but a mouse pointer alternative is also offered. While the first game was based on street police work, this follow-up focused on crime scene examination and forensic investigation.

1988

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Gary Winnick

The first artist to be hired by Lucasfilm Games, Gary Winnick has a special place in both the history of the company and the graphical adventure genre. Alongside Ron Gilbert he created *Maniac Mansion*, the title which arguably laid the foundations for Lucasfilm's future point-and-click success. He also worked on *Day of the Tentacle*, *Loom* and – after leaving LucasArts – *Star Trek: The Next Generation: A Final Unity*. In 2017, he teamed up with Gilbert once more to release *Thimbleweed Park*, a graphic adventure inspired by the classics of the genre; classics Winnick helped to create.

Would you say you were artistic as a child?
I remember being enamoured with comic books and spending hours copying the panel art. I also recall creating and drawing my own characters. Certainly by the time I was in high school I had started drawing and publishing comics 'fanzines'.

When did you first know that you wanted a career in video game design and art?
In the early '80s, I ended up working a bit in the comics industry in New York, after which I returned home to the bay area in California. A friend of mine who owned an art store had started selling Atari home computers, so I got myself an Atari 800 and ended up getting hooked on computer games. Since Atari and Silicon Valley were close by, I interviewed with the Home Computer Division and ended up getting a job as an artist animator.

How did you come to find yourself at Lucasfilm Games?
I had been working at Atari for about six months when a friend of mine who had been working at Apple joined the newly-created Lucasfilm Games Division. He recommended me to the group as a candidate for their first artist and animator. After meeting with them a couple times, they offered me a job.

What was the working environment like at the studio?
It was pretty amazing; we were a small, tight-knit group with similar values. We were encouraged to be as creative as possible and push the envelope of game development and technology at the time. Being part of a much larger and successful state-of-the-art movie company gave us access to some of the best creative and technical minds available. The culture was very collaborative and the work environment was part of incredible facilities that George Lucas had constructed, first at the Kerner complex in San Rafael, then ultimately at Skywalker Ranch in Marin County.

How did you create your pixel art?
When I first started working, scanners really weren't that commercially available. I had gotten used to laying out some designs in coloured felt pen on graph paper that matched screen resolution. I would then laboriously count out and plot the corresponding pixels on the screen. Additionally, I would draw on clear acetate plastic sheets, tape them to the front of my monitor and use that as a guide to plot corresponding points. After a couple of years we graduated to higher resolutions, more colours and scanned hand-drawn images.

Which art software package did you use?
In the beginning we used proprietary software that we created in-house. The programmer and project leaders developed the internal art tools for 2D backgrounds and character animation. After a while, we started using Deluxe Paint.

How did you end up working on *Maniac Mansion*?
Ron Gilbert and I became friends when he was hired to do the Commodore 64 conversion of *Koronis Rift*. We had a lot in common, including a similar twisted sense of humour. We also had a shared fondness for B-level horror films. We used to hang around and brainstorm various game and film ideas. We decided to start a project together since there really wasn't a formal project review process in place; we just started working on a concept for a wacky haunted house-style game. While we brainstormed, I did a number of sketches. As we worked through the design it eventually evolved into *Maniac Mansion*.

What was the process for creating the characters and main story?
Ron and I brainstormed everything based on a lot of the characters and situations in horror B movies. In particular, stories where a group of teenagers decide to go into the creepy haunted house and immediately split up. A number of other concepts came about based on some of our own personal experience, including caricatures of people we knew.

What was your inspiration for the art style in *Maniac Mansion*?
Certainly, the limitations of the C64 drove a great deal of the choices. One of the things we wanted was to easily tell who and what the characters were, hence the decision to go with the larger and more detailed heads. I was also inspired by the iconic look of EC horror comics when developing the Edison Family and their house.

What was it like developing on the Commodore 64? Did you come up against any limitations or technical challenges which forced you to re-think your approach?
I think one of the main issues was when Ron realised we needed to create all the backgrounds as character set in order to best display the scrolling rooms. Ron developed a tool that allowed me to create the room art as regular bitmapped graphics, then cut them up into the appropriate character blocks. When the program broke an image down into character set it would compare and replace similar character blocks with the most often used version. This allowed me to easily iterate and get the best-looking results.

What was your working relationship like with Ron?
It was great; as I mentioned, Ron and I had a very good relationship. At the time we had similar life experience and many common interests, particular in the types of movies and games we liked. *Maniac Mansion* was the first game we both had an opportunity to design, which in turn helped shape both of our careers. Certainly, based on the experience we've kept in touch and stayed friends over the years, which led to working together again on *Thimbleweed Park*.

Looking back, what part of *Maniac Mansion* are you most proud of?
Probably the character development. I think we managed to put a lot of personality into what really was a pretty simple style for the characters. I think the overall approach ended up being iconic and easy for the players to identify with.

How did *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* come about?
That was pretty much David Fox and Matthew Kane. We all contributed, but David really developed the story and characters. I think we looked at the end result of *Maniac Mansion* and decided we wanted to do 'another one of those'.

Was it a deliberate decision to maintain a similar art style to *Maniac Mansion*?
I think the decision was driven by a number of factors. You need to remember that when *Maniac Mansion* first came out the look of the graphics was pretty much considered state-of-the-art. Certainly, the art style we had established for the characters was a factor, since I was also responsible for that on *Zak*. It was also the first game Mark Ferrari worked on and the backgrounds didn't have the same character set and limitations. We also had use of the IBM's more expanded palette of 16 colours, so the visuals evolved a bit.

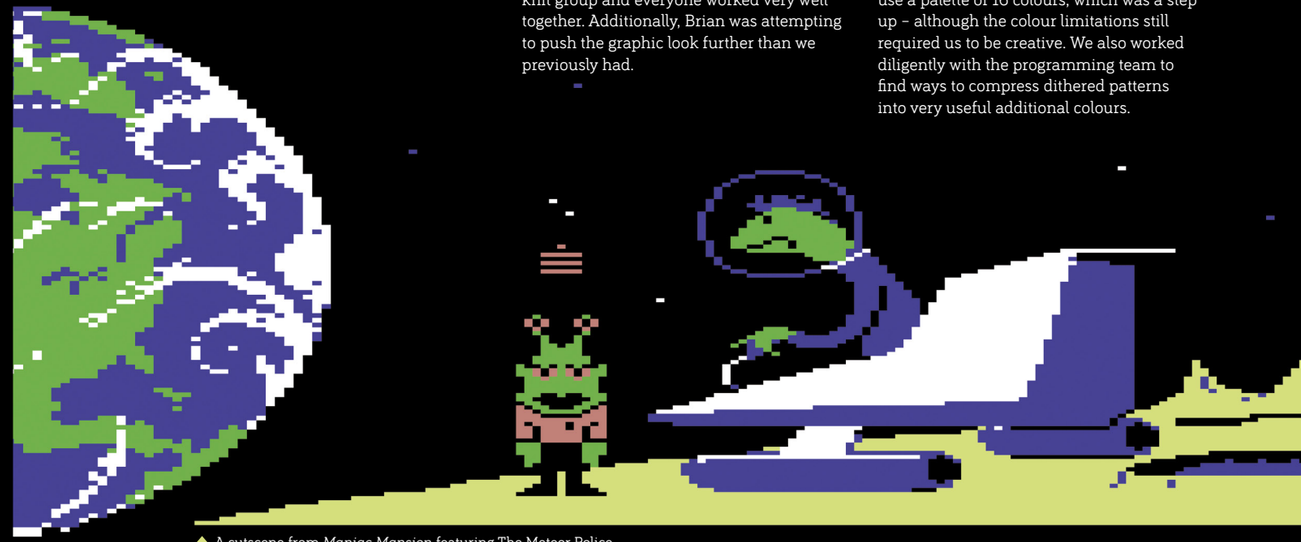
***Loom* is a beautiful looking game, with impressive use of light and reflections. What was it like to work on?**
It was great; Brian Moriarty had a specific vision about the characters and story and they all worked together really well. Besides myself, we had Ken Macklin, Steve Purcell and Mark Ferrari working on the visual development too. We were a pretty tight-knit group and everyone worked very well together. Additionally, Brian was attempting to push the graphic look further than we previously had.

"Being part of a much larger and successful state-of-the-art movie company gave us access to some of the best creative and technical minds available."

What was it like working on a game which had less humour than your previous titles?
At the time we were still getting used to the idea of doing a series of different style adventure games, so switching to the realm of a more traditional fantasy was an interesting change. Brian had a very clear idea of the epic fantasy feeling he wanted to convey, which was fairly inspirational to work on.

***Loom* is unique in that it didn't use the SCUMM engine. Why did you decide on a new approach for this particular game?**
As far as I know, *Loom* still utilised SCUMM under the hood, the main difference is that Brian wanted a more graphical UI instead of using the verbs, so he replaced that with the staff and musical scale.

What was it like developing for DOS?
It was certainly nice to not be constrained by the Commodore 64's character set background and sprite limitations. I got to use a palette of 16 colours, which was a step up – although the colour limitations still required us to be creative. We also worked diligently with the programming team to find ways to compress dithered patterns into very useful additional colours.



▲ A cutscene from *Maniac Mansion* featuring The Meteor Police.

GARY WINNICK INTERVIEW

GARY WINNICK INTERVIEW

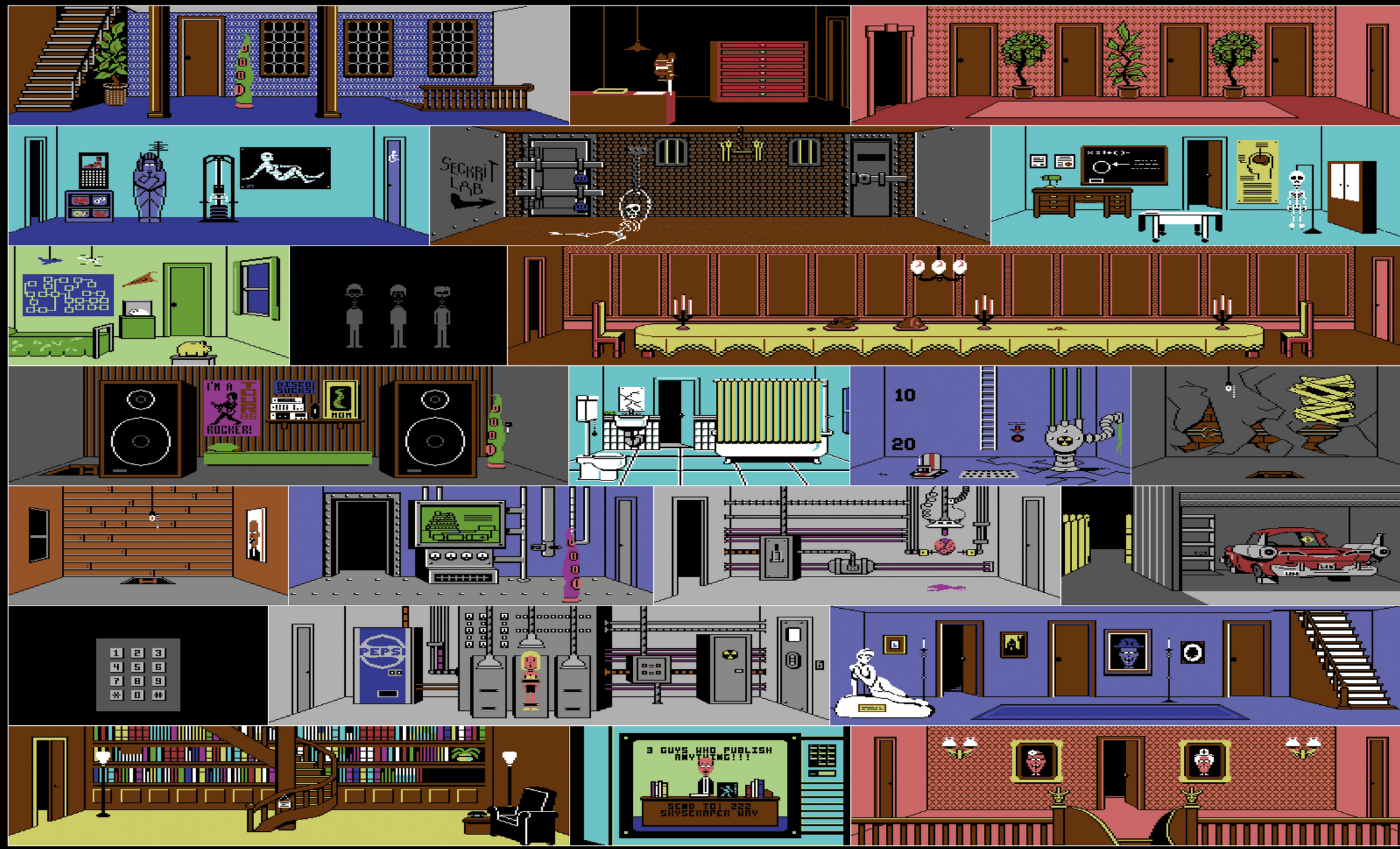
"We certainly felt there was a charm to the simpler, more iconic graphics that our players had identified with; it had fuelled their imaginations to fill in the blanks."

What was it like creating graphics in DOS?
I think we started using Deluxe Paint for the first time on the project for the background development. As far as the animation was concerned, we used a modified version of our internal animation editor called 'Byle'.

What was it like working with Ron Gilbert and David Fox after all that time on *Thimbleweed Park*?
Actually, it was pretty amazing; we all easily fell back into the same rhythm of working together like very little time had passed. Everyone in the group already knew and respected one another. The main difference is that we'd now all had quite a few years of experience in the industry and could plan and work more effectively on the project.

What did it feel like to create a '90s-style graphic adventure in the modern day?
Since our initial team had really last worked together in pretty much that same style, and Ron and I had already determined that was the look we were going for, it was actually a very natural process. Additionally, the new members of our team were pretty much fans of pixel art in general and easily joined in. There was a combination of factors at play aside from our desire to create a visual experience 'inspired by' the earlier games we'd worked on. We certainly felt there was a charm to the simpler, more iconic graphics that our players had identified with; it had fuelled their imaginations to fill in the blanks. Additionally, budgetary constraints that went along with the Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign and our associated schedule also helped drive the choice.

After all these years, why do you love the point-and-click genre so much?
Given the way we've always approached it, it's just been so much fun! We've never taken ourselves or the product too seriously, yet have always striven to create compelling and personally-driven story experiences.



▲ Various scenes from *Maniac Mansion*, created for the Commodore 64 by Gary Winnick.

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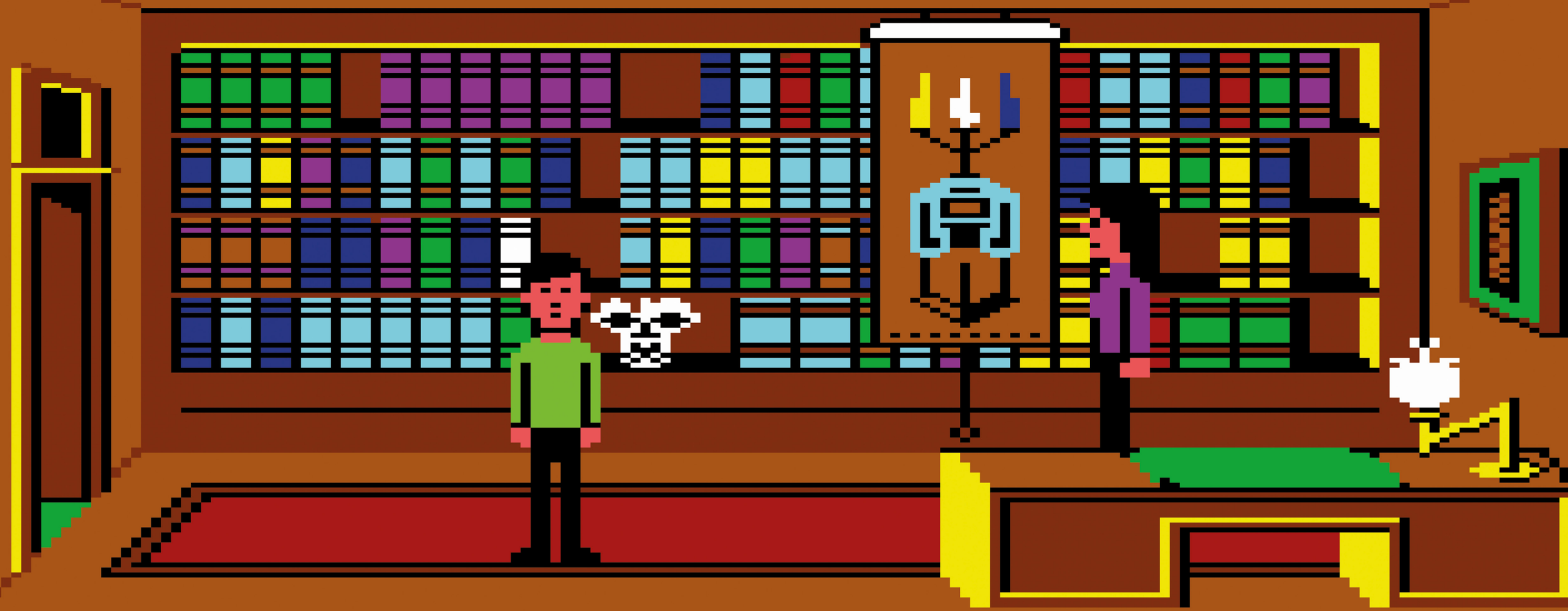
1988

Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders

While *Maniac Mansion* was rooted in one single location, the second game to use the SCUMM engine was far more expansive. Globetrotting Zak is required to travel to a number of different exotic locations such as Egypt, Mexico, Lima and even Mars in his quest to stop the alien Caponians. Initially released for the Commodore 64 and designed by David Fox, *Zak McKracken* features puzzles, B movie references and plenty of humour, just like its predecessor.



35

David Fox

One of LucasArts' earliest employees, David Fox worked on titles such as *Rescue on Fractalus!*, *Labyrinth*, *Maniac Mansion*, *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*. He worked closely with Ron Gilbert and Noah Falstein during his tenure and in 2014 joined Gilbert and fellow LucasArts alumni Gary Winnick to work on *Thimbleweed Park*, a new take on the genre inspired by the classics of the past.

When did you first know that you wanted a career in video games?
I had an inkling in 1972 while on a college psychology class field trip to Stanford Research Institute (SRI). While there, I saw *Space Wars*, the first video game I'd seen being played on a CRT. It was a lot of fun to play and something clicked. I knew I wanted more of it, but the career didn't gel until a few years later while brainstorming what I wanted to do next. The idea of working on a futuristic interactive Disneyland came to me; one in which you were actually affecting the outcome of the rides, and they would be different each time. I knew the technology wasn't there yet, and I wanted to learn what I needed to so, when we got to that point, I'd be ready. That led my wife and me to open our non-profit public access microcomputer centre in 1977, the Marin Computer Center. That's where I taught myself game design by doing ports of other company's games, like Adventure International's text adventures.

How did you come to work at Lucasfilm?
In 1981 I was writing a book, *Computer Animation Primer*. Half of the book dealt with state-of-the-art computer animation, just then showing up in movies, and the other half was a primer on creating simple animations on the Atari 800. I knew that Lucasfilm had a Computer Division, so I contacted them for photos of what they were doing. I got to interview several of the employees, hung around with them during the next SIGGRAPH, and one of the founding members, Alvy Ray Smith, offered to proofread the book for technical accuracy.

Flash forward a year: I had just completed the manuscript for the book, and one of our Computer Center members who worked at Industrial Light & Magic told me about a new 'Games Group' that was starting up within the Lucasfilm Computer Division. I immediately called the head of the division, Ed Catmull, and learned that he had just hired Peter Langston to lead the group. Ed passed my name on to Peter who invited me in for an interview. It turned out that Atari had funded the Games Group with $1 million in seed money in exchange for right of first refusal for the games we were to create.

My manuscript showed I knew a bit about the Atari 800. Everything fell into place and a few months later I was hired as the third employee of the Games Group (Peter was first, then Rob Poor transferred over from his position within the Computer Division to work with us). Of course, it wasn't called LucasArts for another eight years. After being referred to as the Games Group, we eventually became Lucasfilm Games when we'd completed our first releases.

"I saw Space Wars, *the first video game I'd seen being played on a CRT. It was a lot of fun to play and something clicked. I knew I wanted more of it."*

What was the working environment at Lucasfilm like?
It was always a very collaborative and creative environment. We got to rummage through storage closets to select which original Ralph McQuarrie pre-production paintings we might want to hang on our office walls (being an early member, I had a great selection to choose from). Those paintings served as a constant reminder of what we were trying to live up to – to create the *Star Wars* equivalent of home computer games. That was pretty scary and intimidating, so our first games were to be 'throw away' test games… it helped to take the pressure off knowing we didn't have to hit home runs right off.

At first the environment was much more of a research group than a games production house. Being a part of the Computer Division helped there, since their focus was really R&D and not production. But after our first games launched, we rapidly realigned towards production as the primary factor. Unlike most game startups, though, our parent company had deep enough pockets that we could take more time to try out ideas, put more polish and attention to detail in our games, and not worry too much if they weren't huge hits. Over the years, mostly after I left, that definitely changed and LucasArts became much more of a pure game production company.

What was the process for creating games?
This process changed over the years, with more and more hurdles to cross to get greenlit, but, while I was there, it was relatively easy to get a game into production. Generally games were driven by one person (sometimes two), who ended up being the game designer, project leader, and one of the programmers on the team. In the case of *Maniac Mansion*, both Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick were the designers. The designer would write up a concept document of two to three pages and circulate it among the other designers for feedback. If there was interest, the project might go to the next stage, which would be a full design. Often there would be one or two brainstorming sessions at various stages, where all the game designers would participate.

If greenlit, we'd flesh out the design and begin production. In the case of the SCUMM games, we'd describe what additions would be needed to the engine in order to implement various features. We'd come up with a complete room list, including all the objects and puzzles that took place there, a character list, list of special case animations (SCAs), sound effects, music, and so on. Much of this was done during the implementation stage as the game began to solidify. Ron started doing these play-testing events, called pizza parties, since he made sure there were plenty of pizzas to go around. We'd have a room with 10 to 20 computers and previously saved games at various stages so he could get a sense of what was working or confusing.

Although not a point-and-click game, *Labyrinth* was Lucasfilm's first foray into adventures. What was the process for creating this innovative game?
Lucasfilm produced this film, so we were given the option to make a game based on it. We saw some early footage on video tape, were given a script, and were asked if we were interested. It seemed like a great opportunity to prove we could adapt a film into a game (in preparation for possibly making *Star Wars* games in the future). A group of us were flown to England for a week of brainstorming with Douglas Adams, author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Douglas was a good friend of Jim Henson, who was the film's director, and I think he did this as a favour. Also present were Christopher Cerf (Children's Television Workshop), Brenda Laurel (our producer from Activision), Steve Arnold (our general manager), Charlie Kellner (technical lead), and myself. I've got to say that I was pretty intimidated by Douglas' fame, brilliance, and quick wit. I ended up taking all the notes, and asked questions to guide the discussion, but I don't think I ever felt totally at ease. This was all on me since Douglas was one of the nicest people I've met.

We visited the creature shop to see the puppets (or should that be Muppets?) in person, had some great meals where we rarely discussed the game, and then we flew back home. It was up to me as project leader and designer to synthesise all the brainstorming notes into a cohesive game design document which we'd be able to implement by the time the film came out. Having that deadline was difficult, and building most of the technology from scratch was also difficult. Charlie came up with the side-scrolling code, the character animation and scaling engine, and most of the other heavy lifting, code-wise. I ended up coding parts of the gameplay along with Kevin Furry. At first we considered creating a text parser similar to the one used by Sierra Online, but we quickly realised we just wouldn't be able to match their parser's depth within our limited timeframe, so I came up with what we called a slot machine interface. All verbs and objects were listed in two vertically scrolling lists of words. You select a verb and an object to make the sentence. It worked, but wasn't as elegant as Ron's later solution for *Maniac Mansion*.

Did you have to stick to the film script or were you given creative freedom?
We were given some creative freedom, but felt we had to honour the script and the environment created by the film. You weren't actually playing the main character from

▲ This scene from *Labyrinth* shows the player meeting Ludo outside the maze.

the film, Jennifer Connelly's Sarah, so the plot points weren't the same. We placed you, the player, into the *Labyrinth* and had to follow a similar path to Sarah's to make it out. It was important to us that seeing the film shouldn't be a prerequisite to being able to play the game, though I think there was some benefit to having seen it first.

Did you get the opportunity to watch an early cut of the film?
Not really. We saw several scenes on that videotape, but not the entire film, not until it was finally released. We had to go by the script, that early video, and also production shots.

Is it true that the game was a bigger commercial success than the film?
I don't know the numbers for either the game or the film. I think maybe the game was a bigger critical success at the time, based on reviews, but the film is now a cult classic that way more people know about than our game.

What was your role in the creation of *Maniac Mansion*?
Ron invited me onto the project after he and Gary Winnick had completed the design. My role was to script the game – program it – using SCUMM. I wired up most of the rooms and scenes, including their walk boxes and object definitions. I added much of the interactivity for looking at and interacting with the objects. I also scripted a lot of the cutscenes.

Were you involved in the creation of the SCUMM engine?
Not directly. Ron did all the initial coding. I was probably the first SCUMM beta tester. I started using it before it was fully debugged and stable, so I found a lot of the early bugs when things I tried to script mysteriously didn't work as expected.

"For years afterwards, people would point me to tabloid articles that seemed to have been ripped right out of Zak's universe."

DAVID FOX INTERVIEW

What was story behind the creation of *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*?
After working on *Maniac Mansion* for about six months, I knew the next game I wanted to do would be my own design. SCUMM was an awesome system, so that was what I wanted to use to code the game. I knew it was going to be funny, and take place in kind of a 'New Age' universe. Steve Arnold, our general manager, connected me with a friend of his, spiritualist author David Spangler. I spent a couple of days brainstorming ideas with David at his home near Seattle, and we listed all the 'places of power' we could think of, both on Earth and Mars. David suggested Mount Rainier as a location since it's practically in his backyard and had a long history of UFO sightings. He also told me about the 'Face on Mars', so I knew that had to be a locale. As with *Labyrinth*, after the brainstorming I returned home and started massaging our ideas into a cohesive story. It was really nice to create an adventure that was based on my own ideas, in my own universe.

What parts of the game are you most proud of?
How we managed to squeeze in so many crazy tabloid-worthy references. For years afterwards, people would point me to tabloid articles that seemed to have been ripped right out of *Zak*'s universe. I also like the expansive feel of the game. After being shut up inside of the Mansion with the previous game, I wanted people to feel they could travel all over the world – and outside it.

Was it a deliberate decision to keep a similar art style to *Maniac Mansion* or were you limited by the hardware of the time?
There was a major limitation in the hardware, since both games were built for the C64. But another reason was having Gary Winnick on the animation – since he did *Maniac Mansion* animation, it was bound to be similar. When the game was converted to PC and EGA, then VGA, the art definitely shifted as we had more resolution and colours to work with.

How involved were George Lucas and Steven Spielberg in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*?
We had an early meeting with both George and Steven to talk about what limits and restrictions there would be on the game.

▲ A series of eclectic scenes from *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*.

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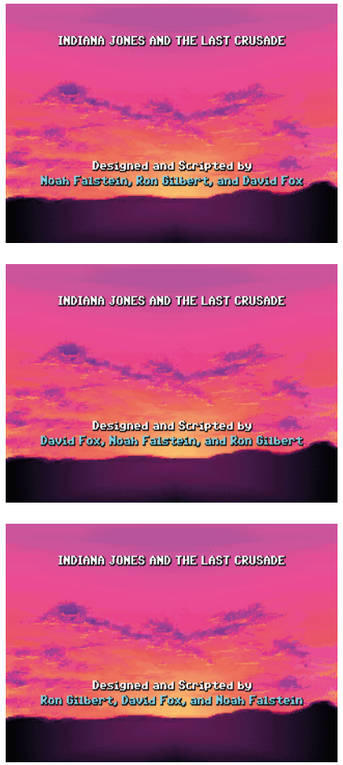

▲ Three separate end credits from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* that appear at random to fairly show each of the developers with top billing.

"Would we still be able to work together after 25 years? It only took about five to ten minutes of brainstorming when everything just felt as comfortable and electric as it used to. What I remember most fondly about my time at LucasArts was all the collaboration with the really creative people there. I really missed that and wasn't sure if it could be recaptured."

We asked if we had to stick to the plot, if it was okay if Indy could die in the game, and so on. They said we could pretty much do what we wanted to, including killing Indy. In fact, Steven started giving us suggestions for locations and ideas that were far beyond what we'd have time to implement. We were very limited on time since the film was going to be released in six months. That's why we had three game designers working together on it: Noah Falstein, Ron Gilbert and myself.

Whose idea was it to introduce new features such as the IQ system and multiple ways to complete the game?
As happens when you're constantly brainstorming ideas, I don't remember whose idea the IQ system was. We knew we wanted the game to feel more expansive than just following the movie's script, so we wanted to give the player various ways to solve many of the puzzles (fighting their way out, talking their way past a guard, or using objects). To encourage people to replay the game, we tracked each solution you tried in each playthrough, and tallied those up as IQ (Indy Quotient) points.

The pixel art style was much more detailed than previous adventure games. What enabled you to make this visual leap?
We ditched the C64 and implemented it on a PC! Since we weren't limited to the C64's resolution and colour space, we could have much more detailed imagery. We still had to make sure it would work with CGA and Hercules graphics cards, but EGA's 16-colour mode was easier on the artists – rather than the C64's character set graphics that we were using.

Do you have any anecdotal stories from the development?
I've told this one before, but it's still my favourite. When it was time to code the ending of the game, where Indy has to escape the temple, Ron gave me the dialogue text he wanted to use and I implemented it. It was pretty irreverent and funny, and I assumed it was placeholder dialogue. Then I got another set of dialogue from Noah that was much more serious and more closely matched the film. I was about to replace Ron's 'placeholder' dialogue with Noah's when Ron told us his wasn't intended as placeholder. We had a somewhat intense discussion among ourselves, with Ron wanting us to use his and Noah wanting us to use them both, and to use a random number generator to determine which set would be used during each playthrough. They checked my code to make sure it was truly random, and we were all happy. We did something similar for how we displayed our names in the end credits, so we'd each have top billing an equal amount of time – but by then it was more of a joke move.

How did it feel teaming back up with Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick again to work on *Thimbleweed Park*?
I was really excited when I heard they were going to do a graphic adventure in the style of our old games. I helped a bit by proofreading their Kickstarter pages, and made sure Ron knew I'd love to be a part of the project if things worked out. Once it was clear they'd make their initial fundraising milestone, Ron invited me on as one of the programmers. But I also participated in multiple brainstorming sessions with them, and later with Jenn Sandercock as well. At first I was kind of nervous. Would we still be able to work together after 25 years? It only took about five to ten minutes of brainstorming when everything just felt as comfortable and electric as it used to. What I remember most fondly about my time at LucasArts was all the collaboration with the really creative people there. I really missed that and wasn't sure if it could be recaptured. So it was really great to see we could still do it. *Thimbleweed Park* was a really fun game to work on.

Why do you think the point-and-click genre is so fondly remembered today?
Ron talks a lot about how charming those old games were. I think it's the result of our humour, our attention to detail, the feeling the player gets when they try something really obscure and find it actually works, the endorphin rush when you solve a major puzzle and get a great payoff for it. All that melds together into a great memory, especially when the game was played with someone you cared for (brother, sister, parent, friend). It could become a very magical experience when all those things came together and clicked.

DAVID FOX INTERVIEW

▲ Scenes from *Thimbleweed Park* showcasing the game's cast of playable characters, with graphics by Mark Ferrari and Gary Winnick.

1989

Future Wars: Adventures in Time
This was the first game to use Delphine's Cinematique interface. Intended to simplify the genre, a right-click brings up a choice of six commands, which are executed with a left-click on a target. Many of the required items are deliberately hidden in the environments, encouraging players to scrutinise the wonderfully detailed worlds. *Future Wars* is best known for it's amazing visuals – created by Éric Chahi who went on to create the seminal *Another World* (known as *Out of This World* in North America) two years later.

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Éric Chahi

Perhaps best known for creating the 1991 cinematic platform adventure *Another World*, Éric Chahi also produced compelling visuals for the French graphic adventure *Future Wars: Time Travellers*, which was released as *Future Wars: Adventures in Time* in North America. Chahi later founded Amazing Studio, where he helped shape the ambitious platformer *Heart of Darkness* before vanishing from the public eye for several years. His last game was 2011's stunning god-sim *From Dust*, published by Ubisoft.

When did you know that you wanted a career in video game design and art?
I wanted to create video games at the age of around 14 or 15, with the intention of earning a living with it one day. I loved arcade games for a long time, but I had no idea how they were made. At the time I saw this as the assembly of electronic components; I didn't imagine or realise that there was actually code powering these amazing games.

Were you artistic as a child?
Yes. I think I was creative rather than artistic. I loved to tinker; I disassembled my toys to make others by recovering the electric motors inside and using them for other things. And then around the age of 13, I created little animated films frame by frame with modelling clay.

Can you tell us about how you came to work at Delphine?
I had just left the Chips Company, a video game creation studio which made games for the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga. I had worked as a graphic designer and animator on *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and *Joan of Arc*. It was there that I developed my artistic side. I got my hands on these two games where the main work was to create graphics from scanned images in books, and to do it quickly. It was not my cup of tea. In the evening I painted fantastic illustrations.

Your first project for Delphine was to create the art for *Future Wars*. Can you tell us how the project started?
Delphine Software had just released its first game, *Bio Challenge*, by Paul Cuisset. Paul was looking for a graphic designer, and Jesus Martinez, a colleague from Chips, had just been hired by Delphine for another game. I got in touch, but unfortunately I wasn't selected. It was understandable as I wasn't at the top of my game at Chips, but I knew my potential. I worked like crazy to produce entirely original images rather than things scanned from books, including an animation with a spaceship and a small screenplay. Paul was super delighted with all of this, and that's how I came to work with him on *Future Wars* at Delphine.

What was it like working with Paul on the game? How were the roles split between the two of you?
It was great. Our roles were very well defined. He handled the coding and I did the graphics.

Did you have much involvement in the overall design of the game?
Paul described to me the scenes and the necessary animations, often with a small drawing showing the layout of the important elements of a scene – the entries, the exits, the events.

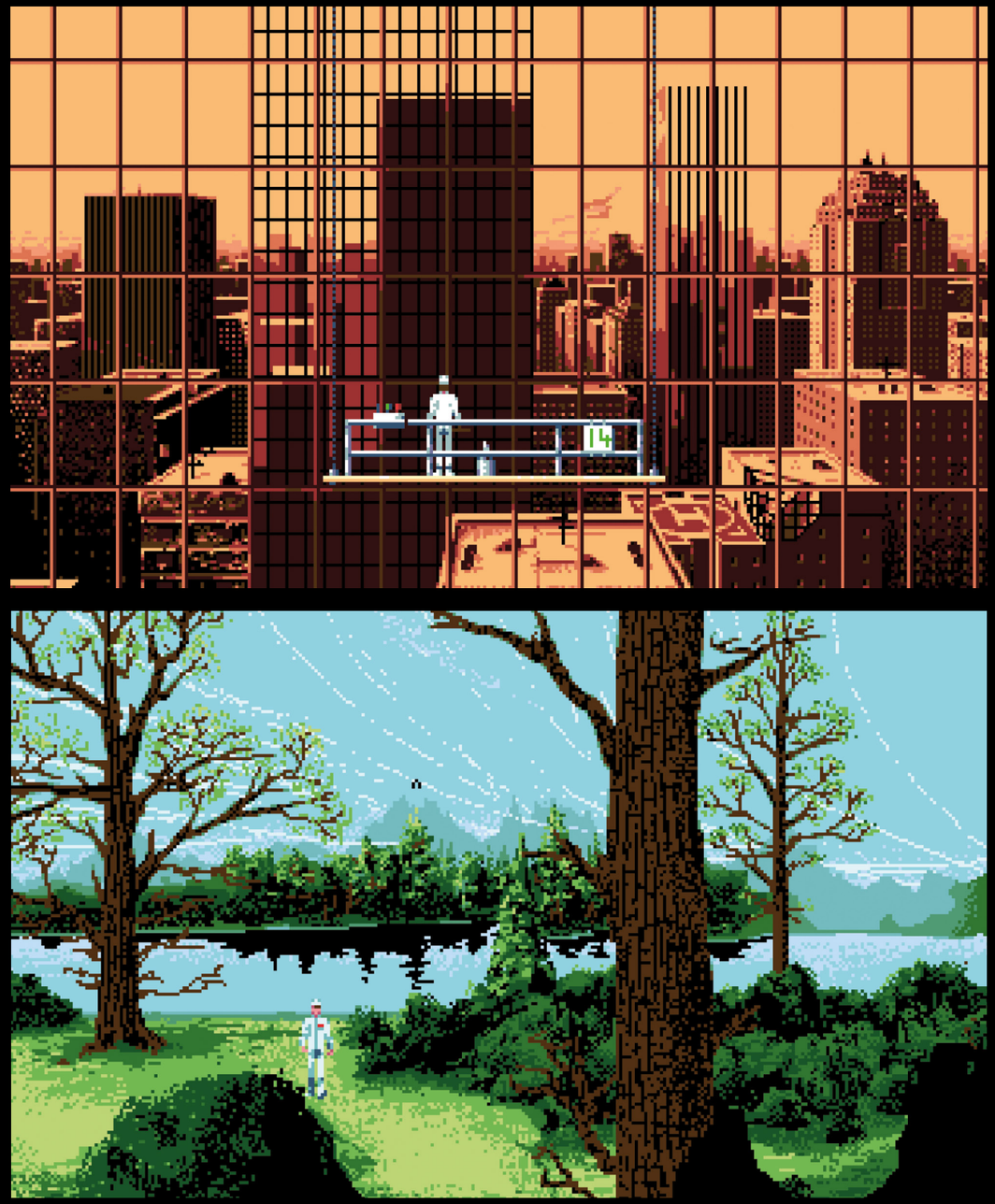
What was your inspiration for the art style?
It came from comic artists. In black and white you can create volume with few lines or shapes. I was inspired by artists such as Bernie Wrightson, Frank Frazetta and Will Eisner, and painters like N.C. Wyeth, who painted illustrations with flat colour. Maxfield Parrish did great colour art in that way, too.

Can you talk about how you created the pixel art? Was it drawn by hand first or straight onto the computer? Which art software package did you use?
Everything was created directly on the Amiga with Deluxe Paint software. This software was a real revolution. It was very responsive, had well-thought-out tools and extraordinary ergonomics. At the time each image had a limited colour palette, so I gave a lot of care to the choice of nuances. I also created the animations in Deluxe Paint as well.

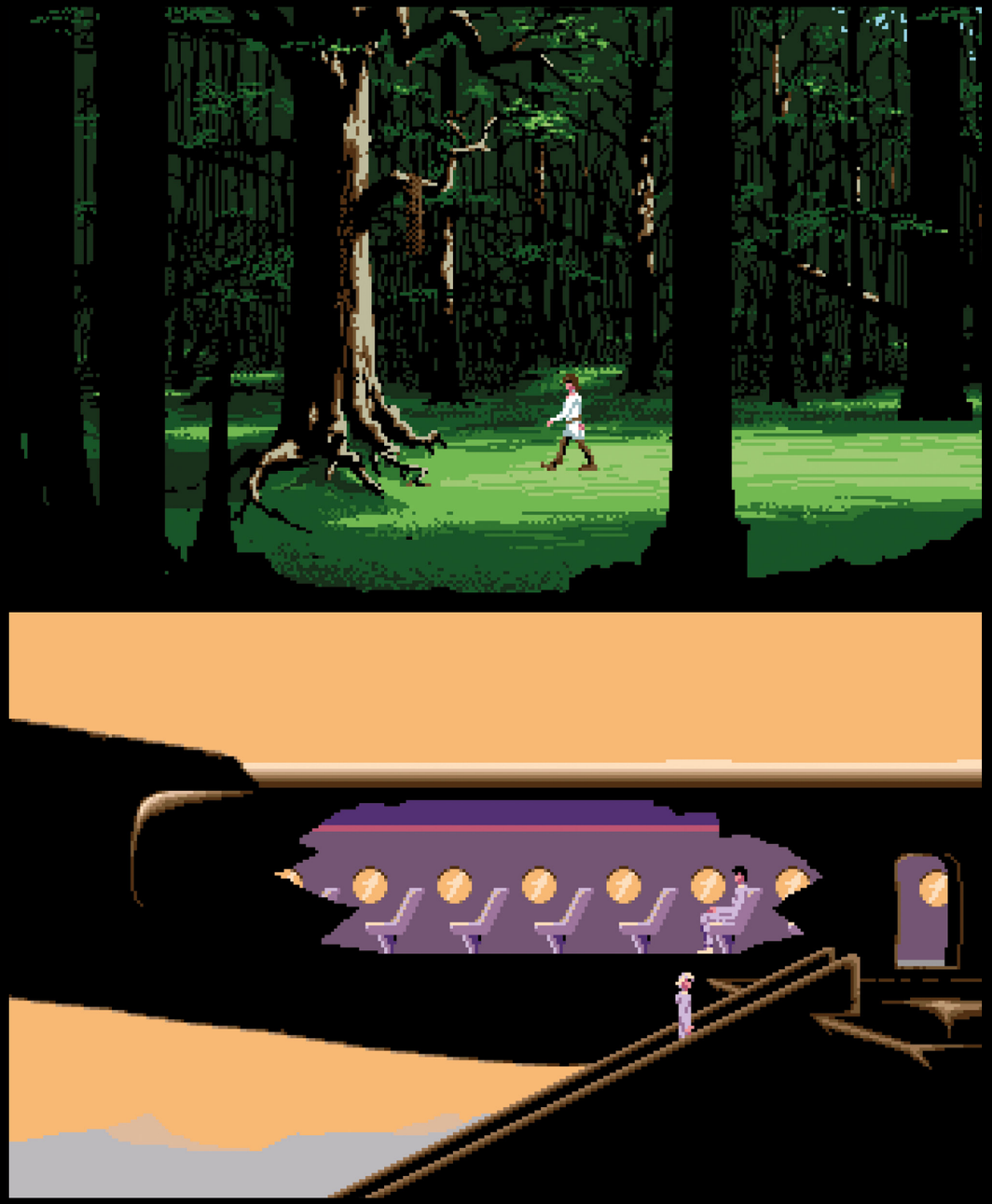
"I think I was creative rather than artistic. I loved to tinker; I disassembled my toys to make others by recovering the electric motors inside and using them for other things. And then around the age of 13, I created little animated films frame by frame with modelling clay."

How did you decide on which colours to use in the scenes? The window cleaner scene with the skyscraper is beautiful and only uses shades of orange and brown.
By shading in brown and orange it helped me to clearly show that it's a reflection, as well as helping me to get good contrast with other objects and characters. I don't remember exactly how I chose those colours, but I remember that the forest scene was influenced by a spotlight I often saw in a real forest. Similarly, I used shades of blue for a night scene. Using white to represent light gives you a good sensation of brightness, and I found this was important.

ÉRIC CHAHI INTERVIEW



▲ Each detailed location in *Future Wars* has its own unique colour palette to help give them a personal identity.



▲ The environments in *Future Wars* rely so much on colour that the outer game box states "Colour Monitor Required".

"Everything was created directly on an Amiga with Deluxe Paint software. This software was a real revolution. It was very responsive, had well-thought-out tools and extraordinary ergonomics. At the time each image had a limited colour palette, so I gave a lot of care to the choice of nuances."

How long did you spend creating the art for *Future Wars*?
It was very fluid for about four to five months. Every two weeks or so, I went to Paul's house. I presented him the graphics ready to be integrated in the game. We discussed the continuation of the design. It was magic, because I could see my visuals and animations from the previous session integrated directly into the game every time I visited him!

Which graphical elements of *Future Wars* are you most proud of?
I really like the post-apocalyptic passage with its orange hues and large flat areas of colour.

Where any of the scenes based on particular artworks or films?
Maybe the spaceship from intro scene; that was inspired by *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Which scene was the most challenging or difficult to get right?
I was never 100 per cent happy with the scene near the lake. I always found this one too flat, and never had a real solution. I think the water colour is too light.

Did the art style in *Future Wars* influence the style of *Another World*, perhaps your most famous game?
In a way, yes; except that the polygon visuals of *Another World* push clearly on minimalism, using surfaces instead of dots.

You updated *Another World* for its 20th anniversary. Would you like to revisit *Future Wars* in the same way?
There are currently no plans to do that, but it could be fun!

1989

1989

Maniac Mansion

After the initial success of *Maniac Mansion* for the Commodore 64 and Apple II, LucasArts released it across a series of platforms over the coming years, such as the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and even the Nintendo Entertainment System. Many of the later releases had graphical overhauls such as this EGA version for DOS which has more detailed 16-colour graphics.

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1989

Leisure Suit Larry III: Passionate Patti in Pursuit of the Pulsating Pectorals

While *Leisure Suit Larry III* used the same text-based interface as earlier games, the graphics became more exaggerated and cartoon-like. It was also the first game in the series to allow a player to control a character other than unlucky-in-love Larry. The protagonist of the second half is the enigmatic and beautiful pianist Patti. As in the first game, you begin with a series of tongue-in-cheek questions to determine your age; failure to answer correctly removes the nudity from the game.

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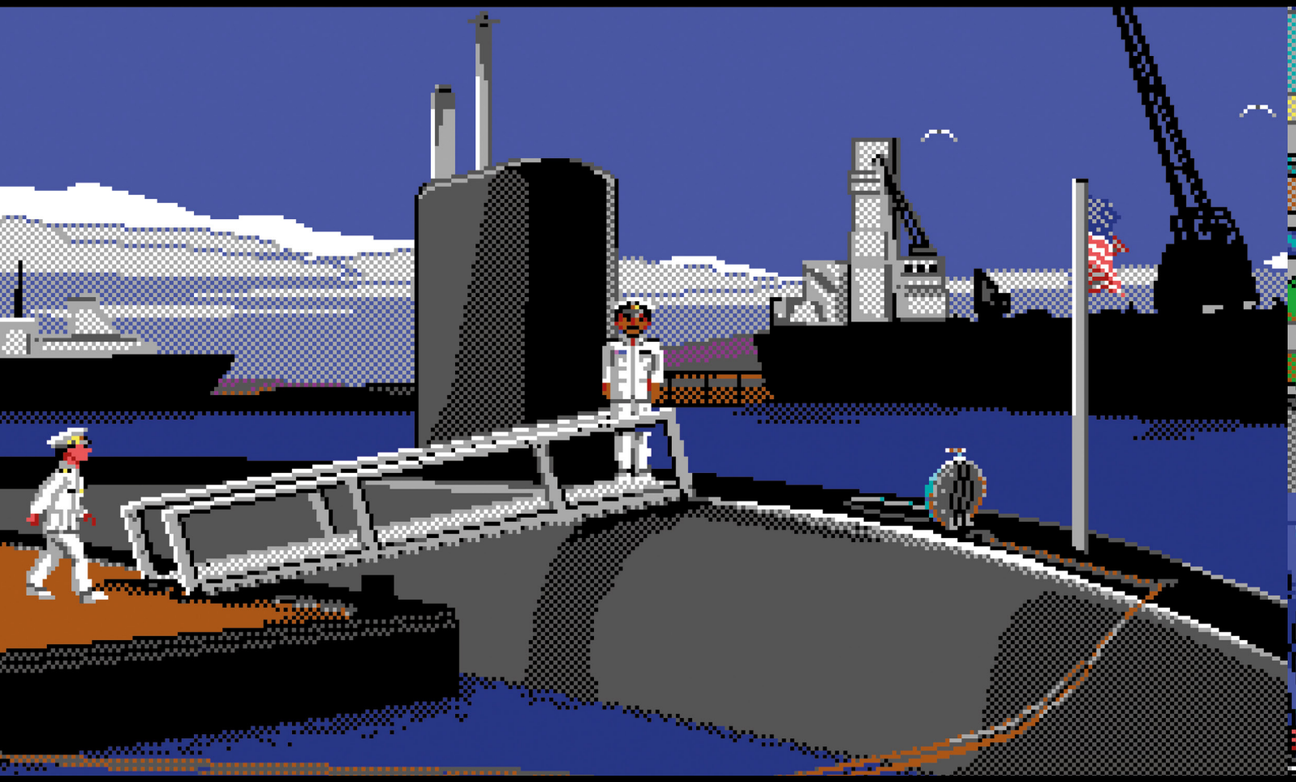
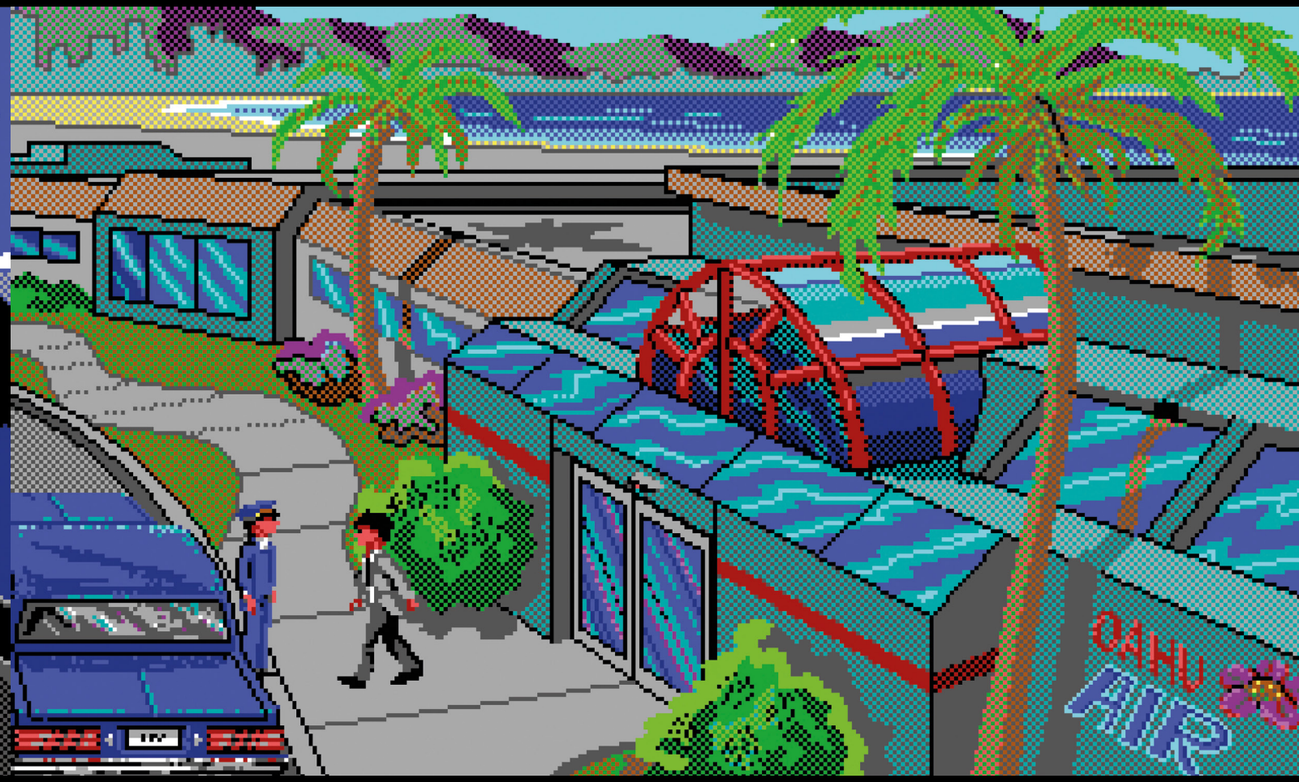
Code-Name: Iceman

Most of the action in *Code-Name: Iceman* takes place on board a nuclear submarine, with a story very much inspired by James Bond. Sierra's SCI engine was evolving with each new release and *Code-Name: Iceman* supported eight-directional movement, changes in character appearance, and a more user-friendly context-sensitive text parser. Aiming to emulate the success of previous franchises, Sierra originally meant *Code-Name: Iceman* to be the first part of a new series, and planned a follow up called *Code-Name: Phoenix*, which was cancelled after disappointing sales.

1989





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1989

Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders

Like *Maniac Mansion*, *Zak McKracken* was initially developed for the Commodore 64 but was later ported to other systems. The improved DOS version featured detailed, high-resolution graphics which added an extra layer of gloss to the wide scrolling backdrops, which were unique to Lucas adventures at the time. The FM Towns version came on CD-ROM with 256-colour graphics, and when played with Japanese text, the redrawn sprites appear in a super-deformed 'chibi' style!

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1989

Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon
Built using the SCI engine, *Space Quest III* uses the mouse for movement and inventory access, but still relies on text input for commands (although vastly improved). The game highlights the rivalry between LucasArts and Sierra, when Roger Wilco uncovers the sinister activities of a video game company known as 'ScumSoft'; it has abducted the Two Guys from Andromeda and is forcing them to design games for the disreputable software publisher.

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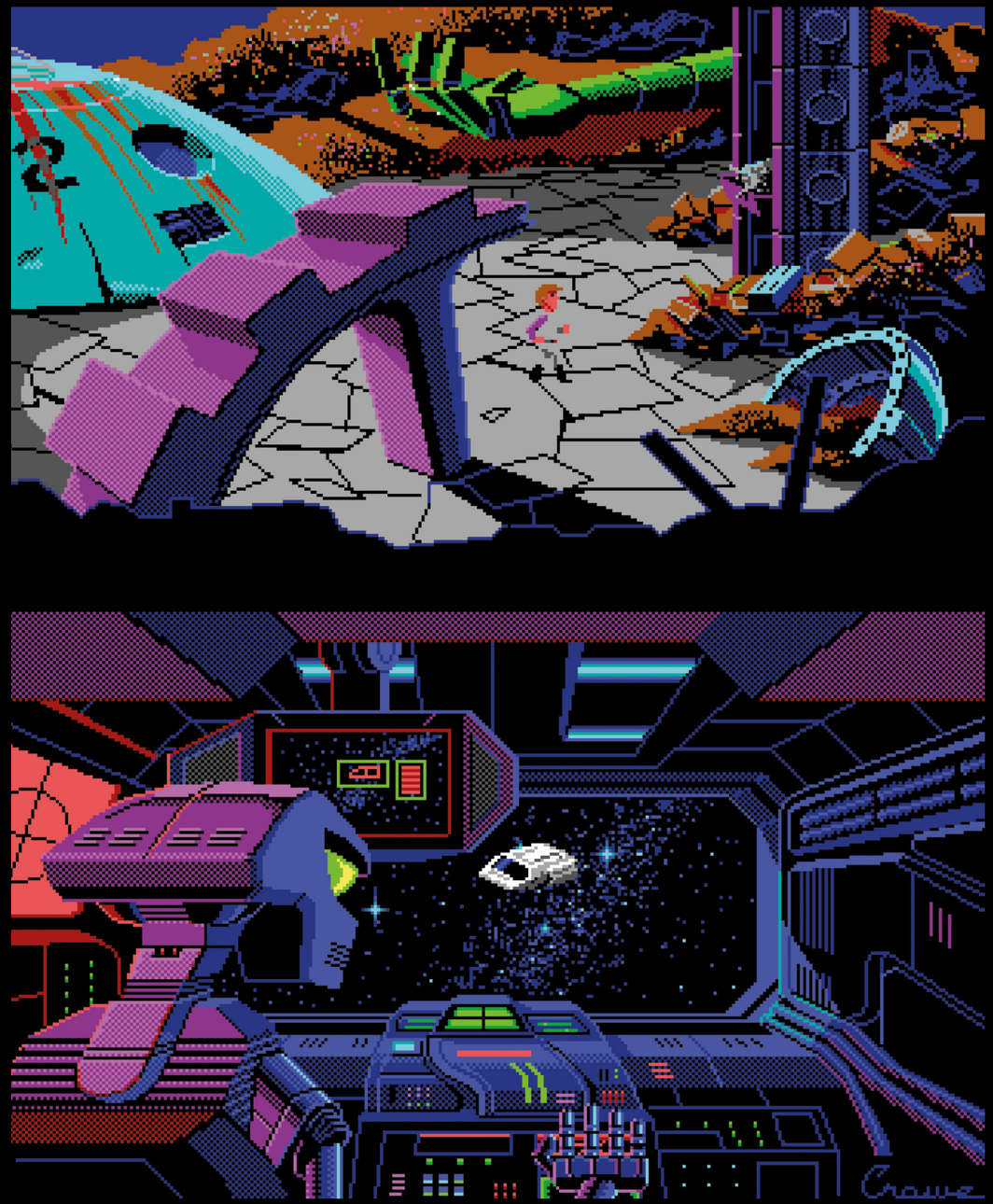


▲ Scenes from *Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon*, showcasing great use of colour, shading and perspective.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure

The game was released in May 1989 to coincide with the Hollywood movie starring Harrison Ford and Sean Connery. The plot of the film is closely followed, and also expanded on in places by the developers. Although it was the third game to be made using the SCUMM engine, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* was the first Lucasfilm game to include the verbs 'Look' and 'Talk'. Initially launched with 16-colour EGA graphics, it was given a 256-colour VGA makeover the following year.

1989

48

Noah Falstein

One of Lucasfilm Games' first employees, Noah Falstein's career in the world of video gaming is enviable. He was project lead on the classic arcade title *Sinistar* and can count *Koronis Rift*, *Battlehawks 1942*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* among his credits. Since leaving the company Falstein has had roles at Dreamworks Interactive, The 3DO Company and Google, and was Chair of the International Game Developers Association from 1997 to 1998.

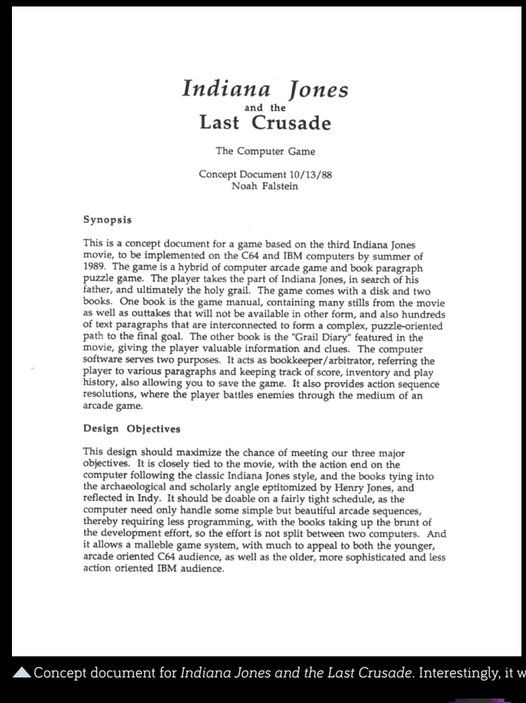
Can you tell us how you came to work at Lucasfilm?
I was working in Chicago at Williams Electronics, having led the project for the arcade game *Sinistar*, and a friend of mine happened to hear that Lucasfilm was starting to hire for their as-yet-unannounced games group. She asked if I could be a reference, I said yes and talked to David Fox – still a close friend now – and months later called him back when the arcade industry had its crash in 1983. He was still looking for people and I came out to interview and was incredibly excited to make it in. I was actually the first person they hired with previous video game experience, and they were concerned that I was too set in the 'old way of doing things', which today seems pretty silly, given how none of us really knew what we were getting into.

What was the working environment at Lucasfilm like?
When I first got there, it wasn't very remarkable – with two exceptions: the people we worked among – many of whom went on to found Pixar – and the movie work going on all around us. Not long after I started work we had a company screening of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* before it was released to the public. About two years after I joined, we moved to Skywalker Ranch, became the first tenants of the Stable House, and that was the most amazing place I have ever worked – or ever expect to work. The day I started work at Google's Mountain View HQ, many years later, another new Googler breathlessly asked me, "Can you imagine working anywhere cooler than this?" And I just smiled, thinking, "Well, yeah..." The Ranch was beautiful; fakely historic in the best way, high-tech, a natural and artificial paradise, and I treasured every day of the time I worked there.

"About two years after I joined, we moved to Skywalker Ranch, became the first tenants of the Stable House, and that was the most amazing place I have ever worked – or ever expect to work."

You saw Lucasfilm grow to become a major player in the video game arena. What was that experience like?
Surprising, gratifying, unexpected. As part of Lucasfilm we suffered from an inferiority complex; compared to the movie work our games were very primitive. But gradually we found our own creative voice – thanks in large part to working solely on original IP for the first several years – and I remember a turning point for me was around 1990 at a Consumer Electronics Show when we were showing off one of our games to someone who said he was a huge fan of our company, and asked how big it was. I told him about 400 people and he gaped and asked if we did something besides video games – the largest game company in the world at that point, Electronic Arts, probably had half that many people. When I pointed out this was the *Star Wars* company he just hadn't made the connection, and I found it really inspiring to realise we had a fan base that included people who just cared about the games we made and hadn't come to us because of the movie connection. It was also great fun in the 1980s to be able to shape the destiny of the company purely through our creative choices; we weren't really focused on financial success in the early years and a lot of the games that became the signature of LucasArts were chosen through personal interest or inspiration – although since nearly every one of use was a huge fan of the movies before we came to the company, we were all interested in cinematic storytelling from the start.

What was your involvement in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*? Can you talk about how the game came about and how the development process worked?
Up to that point, the only Lucasfilm-produced movie the game division had worked on was *Labyrinth*, which was a fun movie but not one of the core properties. Around September 1988 our licensing group agreed to give us the chance to make games based on the upcoming *Indiana Jones* movie. I was the project leader available at the time to work on that, and I spent a couple of months working on a design and project plan based only on the original script and some pictures taken on the sets; we had no access to any of the film footage, although we'd seen a bit of the special effects work being done at ILM. But by November or so I realised there was no chance I could get the game done in time for the late-May 1989 release date – typically our games at that point took 12 to 18 months, and I had only six left – so I asked Steve Arnold, our boss, if I could have help from some of our other experienced project leaders. Ron Gilbert and David Fox agreed to put other projects on hold and work together. It was the only time we had three co-equal project leaders on a team, and also one of our fastest development cycles. We didn't get the game done by May, but it came out in July while the movie was still playing in the theatres, which made a huge difference in sales numbers. It was a very intense project, working hard to get a great game done as quickly as possible.



Indiana Jones
and the
Last Crusade

The Computer Game

Concept Document 10/13/88
Noah Falstein

Synopsis

This is a concept document for a game based on the third Indiana Jones movie, to be implemented on the C64 and IBM computers by summer of 1989. The game is a hybrid of computer arcade game and book paragraph puzzle game. The player takes the part of Indiana Jones, in search of his father, and ultimately the holy grail. The game comes with a disk and two books. One book is the game manual, containing many stills from the movie as well as outtakes that will not be available in other form, and also hundreds of text paragraphs that are interconnected to form a complex, puzzle-oriented path to the final goal. The other book is the "Grail Diary" featured in the movie, giving the player valuable information and clues. The computer software serves two purposes. It acts as bookkeeper/arbitrator, referring the player to various paragraphs and keeping track of score, inventory and play history, also allowing you to save the game. It also provides action sequence resolutions, where the player battles enemies through the medium of an arcade game.

Design Objectives

This design should maximize the chance of meeting our three major objectives. It is closely tied to the movie, with the action end on the computer following the classic Indiana Jones style, and the books tying into the archaeological and scholarly angle epitomized by Henry Jones, and reflected in Indy. It should be doable on a fairly tight schedule, as the computer need only handle some simple but beautiful arcade sequences, thereby requiring less programming, with the books taking up the brunt of the development effort, so the effort is not split between two computers. And it allows a malleble game system, with much to appeal to both the younger, arcade oriented C64 audience, as well as the older, more sophisticated and less action oriented IBM audience.

Action Sequences

These sequences will use animated figures, rendered with our scaling cell animator (system similar to that extracted for Pegasus and Strike Fleet) on fully rendered bitmap backgrounds. Each computer will have customized backgrounds, but no more than 20 single screens per computer will be needed, with minimal object oriented special cases. This will allow us to have top quality game artwork (good for the box too) at reasonable cost. The cell animated figures are still as good as the state of the art in home computer action games. The depth of the arcade sequences (number of enemies, variety of obstacles, etc.) will be somewhat less, as the game will depend on the books included for complexity and variety. Control of the figures will be joystick oriented on C64, keyboard oriented on IBM. The separate games will only need to be tuned to a similar difficulty, not necessarily to identical gameplay, and minor variation from one computer version to another will be acceptable.

The action sequences will be of four basic types. There will be the standard 3/4 view for set battles, with whip and/or gun. There will be a simple maze navigation game. There will be a climbing game (for castle wall, final approach to grail, and possibly pueblo walls). And finally, a top-down scrolling version for vehicle chases (boat, car, plane, train, tank) with combat possible on the move. This last sequence will be the toughest, but we're aiming for simple and fun play, not elaborate effects.

Menu Selection

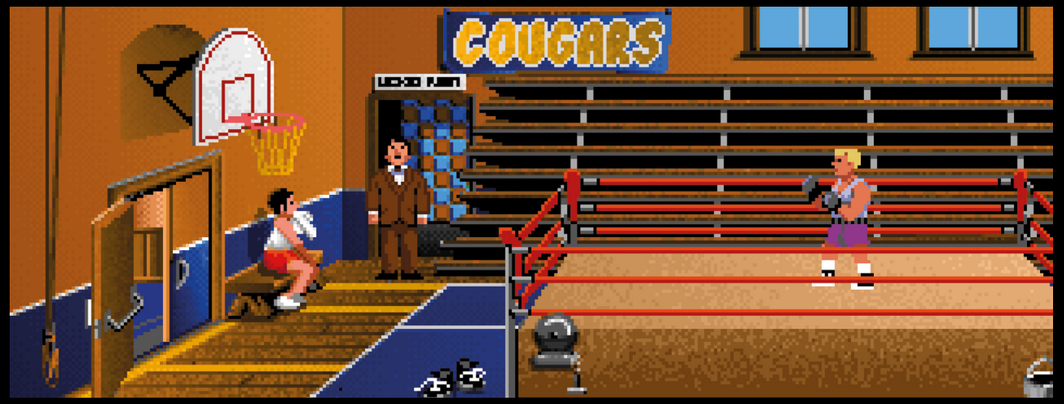
To control the flow of the game, the computer will keep track of inventory and the current state of the game. All paragraph references will come from the computer, making it much harder to "cheat" and flip ahead to see what happens. Of course, the standard save and restore options will be there for seasoned adventurers to use. Instead of a menu only, the menus will appear against backdrops. These backdrops will be artist renderings of the general stage of the game. There will be about half a dozen of these, starting with a long aerial shot of a Pueblo village in the American Southwest for the whole "Young Indy" sequence, moving on to a closeup of a Venice canal, then the German Castle from the outside, a shot of a Zepplin, and finally a hidden desert city. Some simple animation will continue in the background as the player considers his choices. Also shown will be inventory items, and perhaps a time since last save.

Play Example

The easiest way to visualize game play is with an example. We'll start with one from the middle of the movie, where Indiana is with Elsa, searching through the castle for his father.

▲ Concept document for *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Interestingly, it wasn't a point-and-click adventure Noah was proposing in 1988.

▲ The remains of Sir Richard and his inscribed shield from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*.



▲ A scene from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* that did not appear in the movie.

▲ Indy comes face-to-face with Adolf Hitler in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*.

▲ Indy asks a Nazi guard if he'd like to "own this fine leather jacket" in *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*.

NOAH FALSTEIN INTERVIEW

"Steven Spielberg was – and still is – a big gamer, and took more of an interest in our progress. He was actually one of our first playtesters and found a key bug; we gave him a pre-release copy of the game and he played it through and called us directly for hints when he needed them."

How closely did you have to follow the film plot and did George Lucas keep an eye on development?
George was not very involved. I think we met with him just once in the course of the game – that was typical; he wasn't really a game player himself and didn't want to be hands-on. But, in turn, he gave us very wide creative control – in fact we considered the idea of letting Indy get killed in the game as a failure mode, something we didn't generally do but not doing so seemed like it would cheapen the drama of the interactive fight sequences. George said we could do whatever we wanted, but in the long run we decided only to have a real death happen if you chose to punch Hitler in the middle of Berlin, which we felt was necessary because the temptation to do so was so strong – even in the movie you can see Indy considering it – and set it up so the player wasn't really punished. We did, however, want to stick as close to the movie as we could because we figured the people buying the game because of the film would be upset if we changed the story much. On the other hand, if we had puzzles that had solutions based on facts anyone who had seen the movie would know, it wouldn't be much fun – so we stretched things a bit, and added gameplay that fit in between scenes that were in the movie. We were aided in this by an accident – the script we were using was the original script, and they ended up changing the movie and in particular cutting out several scenes we built into the game. We didn't know this until we saw a screening of the movie a few weeks before it came out, much too late for us to change the game. So we made that into a 'feature' – extra deleted scenes! The boxing ring in the college, the radio room on the Zeppelin and a few other scenes were part of the movie originally; in fact there's a dialogue line in the film referring to the radio room that was left in even though they edited out a scene where Indy knocks out the radio operator.

Steven Spielberg was – and still is – a big gamer, and took more of an interest in our progress. He was actually one of our first playtesters and found a key bug; we gave him a pre-release copy of the game and he played it through and called us directly for hints when he needed them. That was a fun experience, and paved the way for me to join Dreamworks Interactive a few years later.

Did you have any involvement in the overall look and feel of the game working with the artists?
Yes, all three of us worked with the artists quite a bit. We shared many of the responsibilities, although I think David spent the most time with them. Given that we were working from the handful of movie stills we had, and this was a historical setting, it was generally enough to find good reference photographs. When there were gameplay issues we worked closely with the artists to get the best perspective or point of view.

How did you come to work on *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*?
The Last Crusade adventure game was the most financially successful one we'd had yet. I don't recall if the decision to hire Hal Barwood came before or after the decision to try to do a sequel to the game, but it was decided that Hal and I would work together on it – he had an amazing film background but no real professional game experience, so the thought was I'd help him on that end. He and I got along very well and have continued to collaborate after leaving LucasArts, and remain friends.

Was it hard to come up with a completely new Indy story that wasn't based on a film?
Not really, it was a very fun experience. My background on our previous games and Hal's extensive screenwriting experience were all we needed to get started. Originally George suggested we consider using a rejected script for *Indy 3*, but we didn't like it much and asked if he minded if we did our own story, and he was very supportive. Hal had worked with both George and Steven previously; in fact, he was a ghostwriter on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and also co-wrote *Sugarland Express*. We did research in the magnificent library at Skywalker Ranch where we were working at the time. We began by looking into various myths and legends that felt worthy of Indiana Jones, and narrowed it down to two: Atlantis and the Excalibur/King Arthur legend. We ultimately chose Atlantis because it seemed more evocative of adventure, and gave us more reasons to let Indy roam around the world – Excalibur would have been hard to get out of England.

What was your role in the game development?
Hal and I did the core design and story development together. He wrote most of the dialogue, but the structure of the game and the story, particularly the part with three paths to get through it, was heavily influenced by my experience on *Last Crusade*, where we experimented with fistfights and action sequences, but ultimately found people tended to either like or hate them, and either way it seemed good to screen out the people who preferred action and give them a different experience.

Which parts of the game are you most proud of?
Well, the multiple path thing was my main contribution, and was also mentioned favourably in just about every review, so that would be it. But I also liked the fact that the "I'm selling these fine leather jackets" line that I'd first written in *Last Crusade* became a catchphrase in not only the *Indiana Jones* games, but also *Monkey Island* and others.

Was there any talk of your story getting made into a film in the series?
Talk, yes. Actual substance – no, not really. A lot of our fans thought it would have been a great movie – and some said so again after *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* came out in 2008 – but we never really expected any serious consideration. Making the game based on a film was good sense but at that time making a film based on a game was not very practical. I think it would make a good movie, particularly as we framed Sophia as a strong female lead in the general style of Marion Ravenwood, but I don't expect it will ever happen, and certainly not with Harrison Ford.

1990

Roberta Williams' King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown
Using Sierra's updated SCI game engine and 16 colours, this remake of the original *King's Quest* was visually similar to the series' fourth instalment, released a couple of years previously. It's not a direct remake, though, as parts of the story are slightly changed, puzzles tweaked, dialogue added, and a set order to finding the three treasures imposed. Alongside the more detailed EGA graphics is the option to use a mouse, although typing is still required for interaction.

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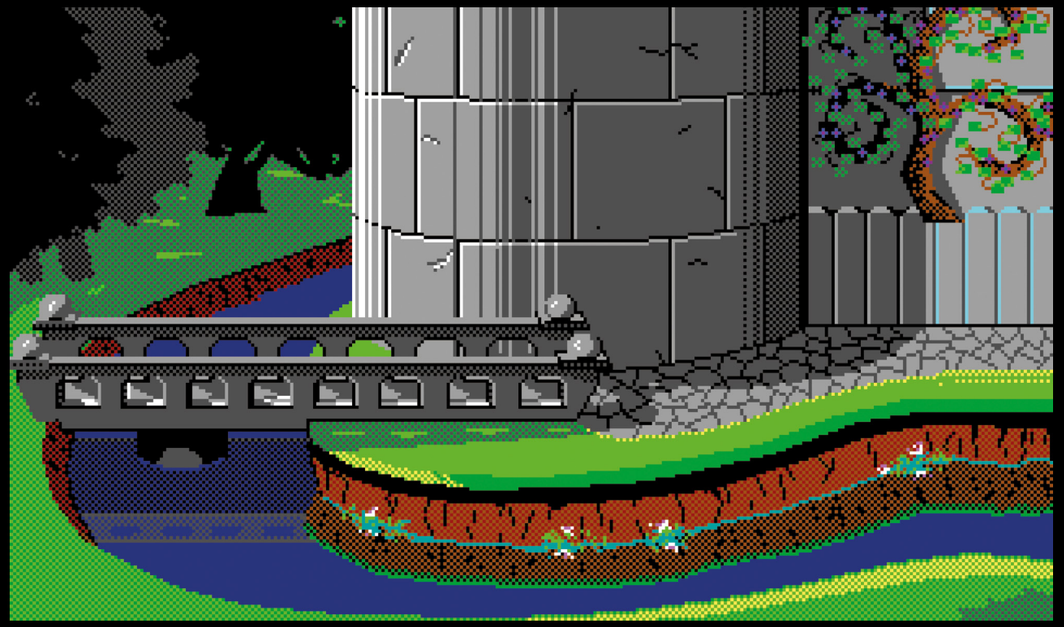
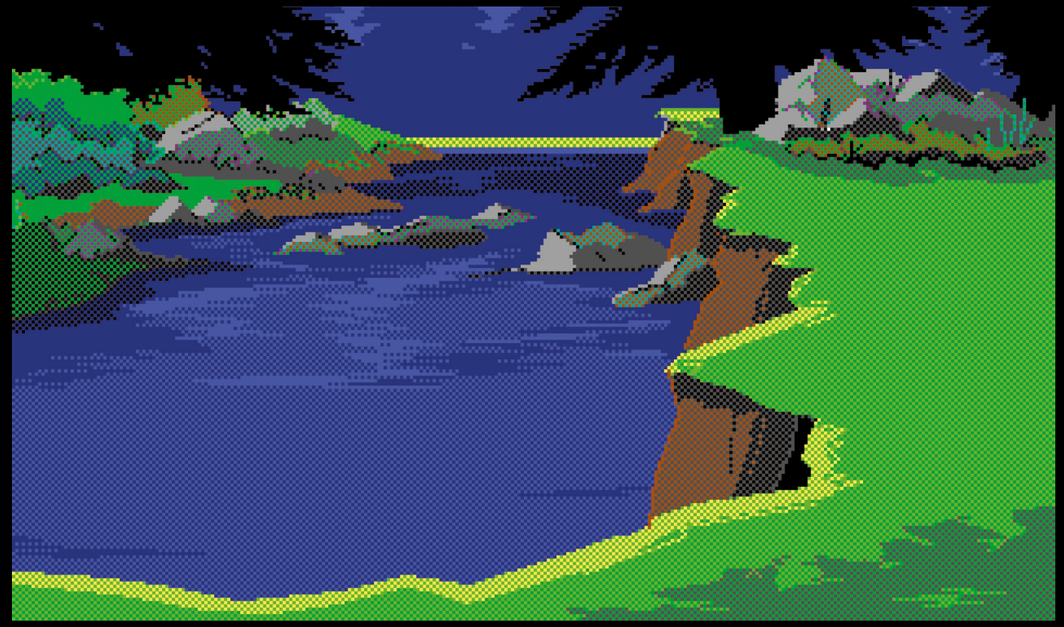
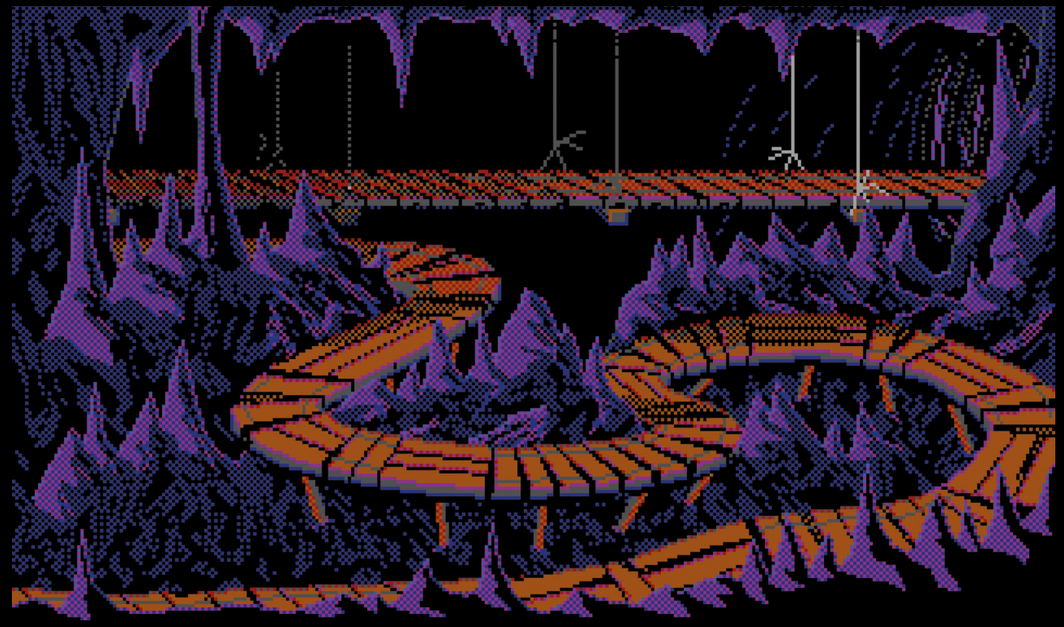






▲ Although most of the land of Daventry will be familiar to players of the original, backgrounds have been entirely redrawn in *Roberta Williams' King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown*.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure

This 1990 release of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* features vastly superior 256-colour VGA graphics, with rich levels of detail; however, the animation and sound remain the same as the original version. A version of the game was also released for the FM Towns that included a CD-ROM soundtrack.

1990

53

1990

▲ A series of 256-colour VGA backgrounds from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*. Scenes include Barnett College, Venice and Brunwald Castle Art Gallery.

54

1990

▲ Animation frames taken from the end sequence of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* show what happens if Indy drinks from the wrong grail. Looks like he chose poorly...

55

Douglas Crockford

A programming whizz and entrepreneur, Crockford may ply his trade as senior JavaScript architect at PayPal these days, but he began his career at Atari in 1980 before moving onto Lucasfilm, which then became known as LucasArts. Crockford volunteered to oversee the port of *Maniac Mansion* to the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), a process which soon became exasperating as the Japanese firm's strict guidelines and demands tested the patience of the team at Lucasfilm.

When did you first know that you wanted a career in video games?
I liked games. I wrote a teletype *Star Trek* game in college. I liked the new arcade games like *Space Invaders*. I bought an Atari 800 because I had always wanted to own a computer. I intended to design a programming language for it, but I was frustrated by the weak 6502 processor and the limited 48K memory. I then decided to make a game, because that was what the 800 was good for. I sold the game to Atari. That led to a job in their research laboratory in Sunnyvale.

How did you get your job at Lucasfilm?
My boss at Atari had connections at Lucasfilm. When Atari started to collapse, she helped me get an interview.

Why did Lucasfilm decide to port *Maniac Mansion* to the NES?
Money. George Lucas insisted that we stay small, be the best, and not lose any money. Porting to NES looked like a worthwhile effort. Profits on old games paid for the development of new games.

What was developing for the NES like?
The biggest difficulty was that we had to redo all of the artwork because the screen geometry was not compatible. Harrison Fong was the lead artist, and he did a brilliant job. I really liked the way that version looked. We had less room at the bottom of the screen for verbs, so we simplified the way the UI worked. That improvement was worked into later games. We were able to remove the copy protection features (like the code wheel) from the game because people didn't know how to copy cartridges. Nintendo games were expected to have wall-to-wall music.

We gave each kid a CD player that would play their own soundtrack. I really liked that stuff, especially Jeff's surf number and the theme music for the *Wink Smiley* show.

Did the original *Maniac Mansion* team have any involvement in the NES port?
No, they were busy on the next games.

The game famously ran into issues with Nintendo's strict policies. Can you give us some examples?
Nintendo's policies took us by surprise, that's for sure. Numerous 'bad words' were removed, meaning that "The meteor is going to be pissed" was changed to "The meteor is going to be mad". Howie Rubin of Jaleco – the company that was going to publish the game under license on the NES – advised us the that the absolute baddest bad word is "kill". The central activity in most Nintendo games is killing things, including *Super Mario Bros.*, where you destroy entire screens of creatures. It seemed that in Nintendo's book, the image and the act are beyond reproach, but the word itself is inherently bad, even if the word does not suggest the image or the act. We often found that we were unclear as to how to interpret Nintendo's policy.

Another example is the arcade games in *Maniac Mansion*. The mansion contains a number of these coin-operated video games, one of which was called 'KILL THRILL'. The name had to be changed, of course. Doug Glen, our director of marketing, suggested that we change it to 'MUFF DIVER', which I thought was a pretty good idea. Unfortunately, I later became aware of the NES Game Standards Policy, which stated in part: "Nintendo will not approve NES cartridges… with sexually suggestive or explicit content." 'MUFF DIVER' had to be changed again. In order to minimise the impact on the artwork, I needed to substitute 'MUFF' with another four-letter word that was less suggestive that could make sense when combined with 'DIVER'. We settled on 'TUNA'.

Even with all of this work, there was stuff still in the *Mansion* that I thought could be deemed as suspect by Nintendo, but I honestly couldn't tell if it was out of bounds; clearly, I lacked the required skills to properly interpret the Game Standards Policy. So I put all of the stuff I was unsure of in a 'Things in *Maniac Mansion* list', which I then passed on to our friends at Jaleco who reassuringly told me not to worry about it. They were, unsurprisingly, wrong.

We submitted *Maniac Mansion* in the hope that the changes we had made would make it suitable for publication. A month later we got a report from Nintendo of America, stating that "There are several places in the screen text that could be felt to be offensive to NES players", and the text "For a good time EDNA 3444" was cited as needing to be changed.

As fans of the game will know, this message is written on the wall in the shower in Dead Cousin Ted's bathroom. We were stumped; we couldn't erase the message completely because phoning Nurse Edna is an important event in the game. So we changed it to simply "Call Edna 3444". That was one issue solved, but Nintendo also didn't like the "getting your brains sucked out" line, either. This is uttered during Dr. Fred's first scene with Sandy. Dr. Fred actually says "getting your pretty brains sucked out". After querying the request I was told that changing "sucked out" to "removed" made it perfectly acceptable. We then voluntarily removed the 'Disco Sucks' poster from the Green Tentacle's bedroom, just to be safe.

DOUGLAS CROCKFORD INTERVIEW

It still wasn't over, however. Nintendo also didn't like a piece of dialogue between Weird Ed and his mother, Nurse Edna, in which Ed explains that his father, Dr. Fred, has been bringing bodies into the basement. Nintendo's interpretation of the speech was that Dr. Fred was a cannibal, and that he was eating the bodies. That was never our intention, so we changed Ed's speech to "He hasn't slept in 5 years", which helps to explain why Dr. Fred is never seen in his bedroom. But even if we had intended that Dr. Fred was a cannibal, what's the harm? He would have been under the influence of the evil purple meteor. The game recognises that it is bad, and your mission is to rescue him from this unhappy state. Who would be offended?

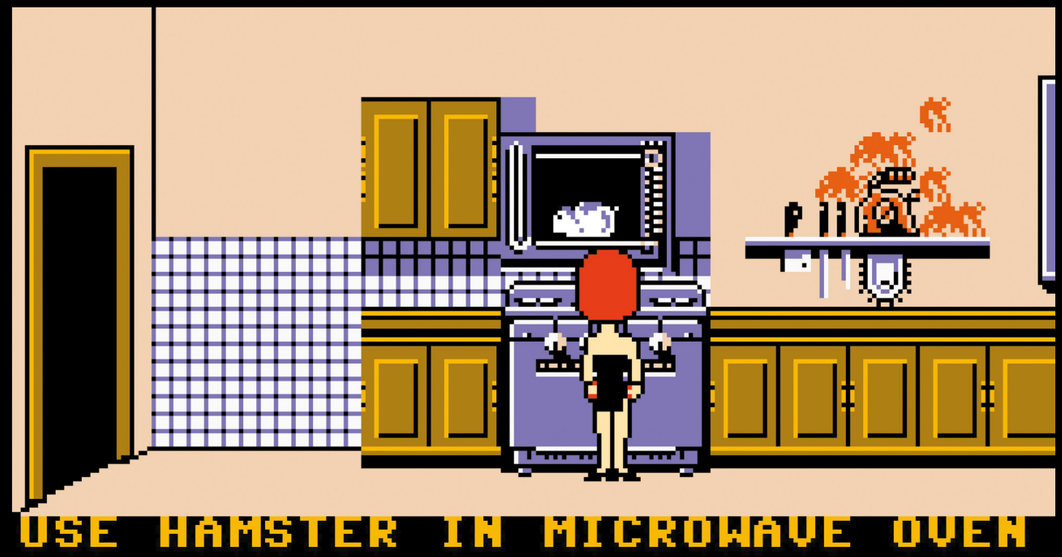
Nurse Edna's obscene phone call definitely had to go. I considered replacing it with "No, I don't have Prince Albert in a can, why do you ask?" but that still gives kids an example of abusive and illegal telephone behaviour. So, instead, we have Edna confuse the caller with Dead Cousin Ted. Edna never knew of or never accepted Ted's death. When the phone rings, Edna assumes that it is Ted and starts talking. Her number is unlisted. Only Ted had it. A natural mistake. This also partially explains why Edna's number is written on the wall in Ted's bathroom.

And we still weren't done. There are several places where nudity needed to be removed. There were two posters in Dead Cousin Ted's room: A swimsuit calendar, and a mummy poster. The mummy is in a playmate pose, completely wrapped in bandages, no skin visible. We ended up removing both, just to be on the safe side. The statue was a classical reclining nude. I told one of the Nintendo minions that it was a Michelangelo. There was a glimmer of hope that we could keep it if it was really art, so I sent Gary to find a book of Michelangelo's work, in the hope that he had made a statue that was similar. In fact he had, a work called *Dawn* for the Medici Chapel. Nintendo's minions said we could keep the statue if we did something about the crotch. But if they could see pubic hair where there is none, what would they see if we tried to hide it? We removed the statue.

This final amend is perhaps the most amusing. "There is also a reference at the end of the game to an 'NES Scumm System' that we're not sure we understand," said the Nintendo representative. "Please advise as to the meaning of this reference." In the credits, which are shown after the conclusion of the game, there are two occurrences of the word SCUMM, which, as any LucasArts fan will know, stands for 'Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*'. They understood that, but still asked "What is NES SCUMM?" Er, that's the version of SCUMM that we did for the Nintendo, we innocently replied. "Yeah, but it says NES SCUMM. What will people think?" I don't know what people will think, and I will never know what people will think. We took it out.

"George Lucas insisted that we stay small, be the best, and not lose any money. Porting to NES looked like a worthwhile effort. Profits on old games paid for the development of new games."

Did you work on any other point-and-click adventure games?
I did some consulting and testing. I managed the CD-ROM versions of *Zak McKracken*, *Loom* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. These were our first products with 8-bit colour and CD soundtracks. I proposed several original games, but none of them got funded.



▲ The infamous scene where Razor puts a poor hamster into a microwave in the NES version of *Maniac Mansion*.

1990

King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder!

The shift to a new SCI game engine meant this was the first *King's Quest* in the series to use a full mouse-driven point-and-click interface, rather than typing commands. The new VGA chipset allowed vastly improved 256-colour graphics, and Sierra began using a digitised painting process for background artwork, rather than the pixel-by-pixel process of previous series entries.

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1990

Loom

Bobbin Threadbare is trapped on the island of Loom with only his magical instrument – which is fortunate as puzzles in this game are solved by playing music, rather than using items in the then standard LucasArt's SCUMM engine. *Loom* was often criticised for being too short, but designer Brian Moriarty claimed this was deliberate so the majority of players would get to enjoy the entire story.

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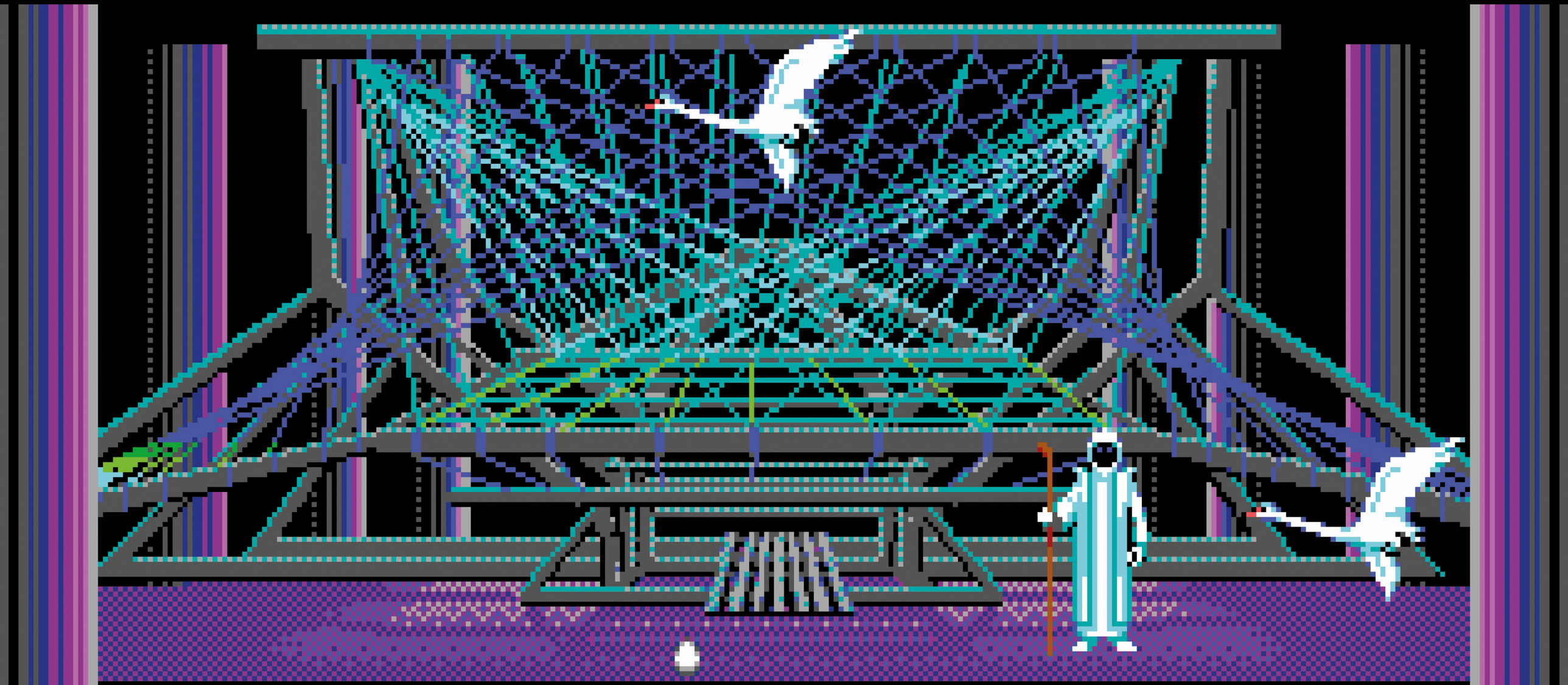
1990



▲ Bobbin Threadbare stands in front of the 'Great Loom' holding his musical distaff. Excerpts of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* are played throughout the game.

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Mark Ferrari

An illustrator by trade since 1987, Mark Ferrari's artwork can be seen in Lucasfilm and LucasArts classics such as *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, *Loom* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. Ferrari also contributed to software produced by Electronic Arts, Vivendi, Virgin and Acclaim, and in 2007 he published his first novel, *The Book of Joby*. He teamed up with former LucasArts alumni Ron Gilbert, David Fox and Gary Winnick for 2017's *Thimbleweed Park*, a spiritual successor to the classic point-and-click adventures of yesteryear.

Were you artistic as a youngster?
I drew a lot in class – almost from the start. My maths notes usually consisted of one or two pages of burning castles and ghosts wandering among gravestones engraved with the names of my acquaintances and teachers.

How did you enter the video game industry as an artist?
I had no idea I wanted a career in video game art. In fact, I wasn't convinced I wanted such a career until at least a year or two after I had one. In 1987, at the age of 31, I showed a collection of my sci-fi and fantasy artwork in public for the first time at a sci-fi convention called BayCon in San Jose, California. In those days, regional and even local science fiction conventions were not just fan and gaming events; they were major networking and deal-making events for professionals at the industry's highest levels. To my disbelieving amazement, my collection of coloured pencil work was awarded Best of Show in the Professional category that weekend. To my further astonishment, Gary Winnick – art director at Lucasfilm Games – was there that weekend and was pointed in my direction by the very kind and generous Tom Kidd, the convention's Artist Guest of Honor that year. When Gary asked if I might like to come and "audition" for a job at Lucasfilm Games – then located at the Skywalker Ranch – I told him that I would be excited to do anything there at all, but confessed immediately that I was a confirmed technophobe who had never touched a computer, and was therefore unlikely to be the guy for this job. He responded to my disclaimer by explaining that they'd consistently had better luck teaching talented artists to use computers than by trying to teach talented computer technicians how to be artists. That made sense, so I happily gave it a try.

I came home from that sci-fi convention reeling with dread at the thought of going to Skywalker Ranch only to discover that my father, a public school science teacher, owned a desktop computer with a digital paint program – by Atari, I think – already installed on it. I rushed to my parents' home to try it out, hoping to be at least a bit less ignorant at my impending audition. After a few hours of practice, I managed to create a jagged little African hut scene. I survived my audition by drawing more or less the same scene in Deluxe Paint a few days later, and was, to my amazement, hired as a background artist. The next three years, spent drawing background art for 8-bit, EGA games at Lucasfilm were, I think, the most enjoyable of my career.

"We all ate a very good lunch every day in the 'Victorian mansion' that housed Mr. Lucas' library, administrative offices and the equally Victorian employee dining room."

What was the working environment at Lucasfilm like?
Truly magical. I'm one of those who has had the misfortune to do the best things in his life first! To begin with, there was the place itself. In those days, Lucasfilm's games division was still located in a cluster of offices 'disguised' as farm buildings on Skywalker Ranch – which was as beautiful as it was legendary. A lake, herds of deer wandering grassy lawns and stands of storybook trees, and Mr. Lucas' state-of-the-art post production facility disguised as an old winery. We all ate a very good lunch every day in the 'Victorian mansion' that housed Mr. Lucas' library, administrative offices and the equally Victorian employee dining room. For a green kid from the suburbs, having lunch there at all was a privilege. Eating across the room from Lucasfilm administrators or Mr. Lucas himself at a table with Huey Lewis, Leonard Nimoy, The Stones or Linda Ronstadt among others, was really strange in all the best ways. Everyone understood, of course, that although it looked like they were there in the same room with you, they were actually on another planet altogether. Mr. Lucas very generously trusted his employees to share his dining room. We were careful, I believe, to merit that trust. But they were still over there – eating human food from the same buffet line as my lunch came from, and I won't pretend that wasn't a thought-provoking experience that likely taught me to recognise the shared humanity of 'famous' people – another not-useless realisation for a green kid from the suburbs.

Then, more importantly, there were the people I worked with. Gary Winnick, Ron Gilbert, Steve Purcell, Ken Macklin, Martin 'Bucky' Cameron, David Fox, Brian Moriarty and Noah Falstein were all more creative, more talented, more fun and, frankly, more collegial than anyone I had ever worked with before, or possibly since. Computer games were different then; both their size and scope, and their content. And they were made by much smaller teams of people who worked together much more closely – in both the organisational and literal senses of that word. The entire team shared three, maybe four offices all right next to each other and migrated constantly in and out of one another's space. Each of us had clear, official job titles: art designer, writer, programmer, art director, character artist, background artist and so on, but the actual work was not half so neatly divvied up in those days. Programmers and designers had lots to say about art. When it was time to invent storylines, puzzles, characters and dialogue, the whole team often sat together brainstorming. There may never have been funnier or more boisterous brainstorms than those.

And by the standards of the time, I was very well paid. My father was a public school teacher. My mother worked as hard (or harder) than anyone – at home, without any pay at all. I grew up what many would call 'fairly poor.' During and after college, I'd worked mostly for a sequence of churches,

▲ Mark's first role at Lucasfilm was the EGA DOS port of *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*.

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and supplemented that income working as everything from late-night janitor to soda fountain 'jerk', to summer camp dining room counsellor (or dishwasher). That job at Lucasfilm was my first experience of being something other than 'poor'. It was also the first time in my life that I'd ever felt that I was taken seriously as a person or an artist. To say that the job was a life changer for me would be an understatement to shame any British diplomat. Like I've said, this, very improbably, was virtually my first real illustration job. The only sad thing in the mix here for me was that I had no way of knowing yet that it really didn't get any better than this.

"I created compositions that were so unlike what had been envisioned by the designer – or which would cause so many headaches for the programmers to implement – that I was asked to try again. But mostly, I was allowed to let my imagination run, and even to push parts of the game in some unanticipated direction with my art."

How did you find working alongside great game designers such as Ron Gilbert and David Fox?
I should emphasise here that I was never treated like a newbie by these industry greats. There was a lot I didn't understand about how things were done, and why. They explained what I needed to know – constantly at first – without any hint of condescension that I remember. But right from the start, if there were creative decisions that I might have thoughts about, I was asked and listened to, as if that were the most natural thing in the world. There was little if any sense of the 'command stratification' I have come to take for granted in most other workplaces since. They were always giving the task at hand their full and enthusiastic best, which continually inspired me to do the same. We all really wanted to be there. We were all excited and interested by what we did – individually and as a team. That, I believe, is why the games we made came to be regarded as 'classics' later. If any of us ever thought we were making classics then, I sure never knew about it. Well, Ron might have known. I suspect that Ron was busy making classics in grammar school, but don't tell him I said so!

Can you talk us through the process of creating art for games back then?
Art was definitely drawn straight onto the computer. I'm not even sure what the state of scanning technology was back then, but virtually all of both the character animation and the environmental background art we did for Lucasfilm games was generated on-screen – via a mouse – using a then industry-standard 2D digital art tool called Deluxe Paint II, or 'DPaint' in daily vernacular. There was no industry standard tool for 3D art then, of course. There wasn't even a widely available tool for doing 256-colour (VGA) art yet. Just DPaint's 16 horrific default (EGA) colours. The same 16 colours for any and every screen or character in any and every game. Most of them were chosen more for 'mathematically pleasing' RGB signatures than for their 'visual helpfulness' by talented computer technicians learning to be artists, I suspect! We worked at the ranch on state-of-the-art PC desktop computers with five-inch floppy drives, and newly upgraded with 50-megabyte hard drives and 33MHz of raw processing power. No one there had any idea what people making EGA games were going to do with all that space and speed!

When it came to creating background art, did you take direction on what was required, or were you given artistic freedom?
At Lucasfilm I was told by the game designer or by the art director what scene layout was required in a given image to accommodate whatever action or puzzles were to be contained within. After that – at Lucasfilm, at least – I was given more or less free reign about what to draw and how to render it. On a few occasions, I created compositions that were so unlike what had been envisioned by the designer – or which would cause so many headaches for the programmers to implement – that I was asked to try again. But mostly, I was allowed to let my imagination run, and even to push parts of the game in some unanticipated direction with my art.

***Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* was your first game at Lucasfilm. What was this like to work on?**
I was an environmental background artist for that, and virtually all the other games I worked on at Lucasfilm. My role was to make rooms and landscapes that looked as entertaining and natural as possible using solid fields of those 16 god-awful EGA colours I keep harping on about. Knowing nothing at all yet about how or why digital game art was made, I quickly discovered that I could make much better-looking environments by dithering those 16 lurid colours. CRT monitors produced such screen-blur in those days that the dithered colours almost blended into nearly solid new colours on screen. So I just started doing that, until Ron rushed in from next door with a cadre of panicked programmers to explain – in a very respectful way – that dither did not compress! They understood my discontent with EGA colours, but I was single-handedly doubling, tripling or even sextupling the disk space required to store these images by drawing them this way. So, I sighed and went back to mapping out the garish, day-glow EGA environments that, frankly everyone just loved and remembers fondly now.

So, it's fair to say that it was rather frustrating working within the restrictive limitations of technology at the time?
When we were done at last with art work for *Zak McKracken*, I stayed after work one day and created a fully-dithered EGA image of a twilit moonrise over receding oak-covered ridgelines. Then without saying anything to anyone, I simply left the image up on my monitor in mute protest – I shared an office with the art director, Gary Winnick then – when I went to lunch. When I returned, Ron Gilbert and Steve Arnold, then the head of the Games Division, were standing in front of my desk having a very animated conversation about why exactly dither couldn't be made to compress. A couple of weeks later, we were able to compress dither after all! That is how I tended to manage the restrictions of digital media in those days. And while Ron was an impeccably respectful and enjoyable friend and colleague throughout my three years there, I would not blame him at all if I were to discover now that he'd have been as happy to take me out after work on some occasions and drown me in the pond!

MARK FERRARI INTERVIEW

"If you're asking how I enjoyed the industry switch from EGA art to VGA art, then the answer is very much! Once I was free at last from that wretched 16-colour palette, I could create pretty much whatever I envisioned in my head on that screen."

Loom is a beautiful-looking game, even by modern standards. What was it like to work on?
Creatively really satisfying! We were creating dithered EGA environments I actually liked the look of! It was both more work – for everyone, I suspect – and more fun (for me, at least). Steve Purcell started to tell people not to look directly at whatever image I was working on "because it'll make you blind!". Brian Moriarty's lyrical and creatively narrative approach to game design pretty much made this a dream project for the likes of me. Of course, during the production of *Loom*, Steve and Bucky went out and bought bull whips like Indy's to practice snapping at things with, which both scared the hell out of me and entertained me tremendously.

The studio eventually shifted its focus to PCs, which offered tangible technological benefits. What was it like to finally work with more colours and pixels?
If you're asking how I enjoyed the industry switch from EGA art to VGA art, then the answer is very much! Once I was free at last from that wretched 16-colour palette, I could create pretty much whatever I envisioned in my head on that screen. I drew mostly using selections filled with various kinds of gradient fill, and by using long colour ramps which made the difference between individual colours and the colours next to them smaller. I was even able to 'erase' the appearance of pixellation in a lot of my work, long before industry tools and products moved to anything like high-resolution graphics. The dawn of VGA graphics was my creative, professional independence day. Sadly, this transition did not occur – for me or Lucasfilm games, anyway – until after we'd made *The Secret of Monkey Island*, and I was not long with Lucasfilm after that.

What was it like working on *The Secret of Monkey Island*?
I was one of several background artists for perhaps our most classic and famous game – once again in glorious dithered EGA colour. The VGA and high-res versions were all later ports of our original EGA artwork. I was long

▲ A selection of environments from the EGA version of *Loom*, for which Mark was a lead background artist.

gone from Lucasfilm games by the time those ports were made, and had no part in producing them. I did, however, participate as boisterously as any of the others in many long, hilarious conversations about everything from puzzle design and narrative style to character names. Did you know that an on-screen character sprite was called a 'character brush' in those days? So Ron would say, "Okay, we're going to have a playable girl protagonist this time as well as a guy protagonist. We're looking for character names. Any ideas?" Bucky: "Well, why don't you call the guy, Guy?" Steve Purcell: "Yeah. Guy Brush. Somethin' wrong with that?" The rest is history.

Did you have any idea that *Monkey Island* would become a seminal piece of work?
We all intended to make a kick-ass fun and funny game. We wanted everything we made in those days to be kick-ass fun and funny. I also wanted it to be beautiful, because I wanted everything to be beautiful. But if any of us knew we were creating a 'classic', I never heard about it then. In fact, because my focus has always been so much more on art than on games, I didn't even realise it had become a classic until one morning in 2005 when I was marched around a large gaming subcontractor I'd just decided to work for, being introduced to 50 or 60 of my new, mostly 20- and 30-something colleagues (I was nearly 50 by then), who kept going slack-faced at the mention of my name, and saying things like, "You're not *the* Mark Ferrari", like someone who'd just reeled in a living coelacanth off the coast of South America. When I finally asked them why they were saying such things, I was told, "Dude, that game's a classic! I grew up playing *Monkey Island*. It's why I'm in the industry!" First I'd heard of it. That is how out of touch I've always been!

"We all intended to make a kick-ass fun and funny game. We wanted everything we made in those days to be kick-ass fun and funny. I also wanted it to be beautiful, because I wanted everything to be beautiful. But if any of us knew we were creating a 'classic', I never heard about it then."

▲ Examples of Mark's iconic background art from the EGA version of *The Secret of Monkey Island* created in Deluxe Paint.

MARK FERRARI INTERVIEW

***Thimbleweed Park* is your most recent game. What was it like working with Ron Gilbert, David Fox and Gary Winnick again after all this time?**
It was a tremendous and satisfying opportunity, not only to make a game like the ones we used to have such fun making – about storytelling, and puzzle solving, and quirky characters and humour, instead of just running down an endless 3D hallway punching, stabbing, kicking and blowing up whatever moves – but to enjoy the company and creative collaboration of Gary, David and Ron again after so many years. I am delighted and honoured to have been given the chance. The tools I used back in the day no longer really exist; Deluxe Paint won't even run on any computer I have access to these days. Figuring out how to convincingly 'fake' old mouse-work processes with a stylus, on a Cintiq screen – in Photoshop, and at my age – was very interesting, and challenging in many of the best ways, but no picnic. There are lots of things in *Thimbleweed Park*'s graphic style that neither I, nor anyone, could have done way back in the late '80s, but they were all precisely the kinds of things I and the rest of us were trying to do when we first made *The Secret of Monkey Island*. Once the console deal was announced and the game's scope and visibility ratcheted up, there was increasing pressure – stated and unstated – to figure out how best to balance making this 'just like an old unopened Lucasfilm point-and-click adventure game', and create a title and experience that would and could compete in a jungle of cinematic console games at the same time. I'm still rather amazed at the degree of Ron and Gary's success in walking that line, but that tension generated interesting turbulence for the team all the way through. It was an awesome experience – which I am thrilled we all survived!

30 years have passed since you first joined Lucasfilm. Why do you still love the point-and-click genre so much?
As an artist, I feel the stage sets we rendered as best we could for those earlier games conveyed all sorts of personal artistic style and evocative atmosphere, while most of the 3D game environments that came after them – designed by human artists, but rendered by algorithms – seemed almost universally airless, lightless, and rendered in such a uniform 'algorithmic' art style. This has become much less so in recent years as the tech has evolved and the artist has been allowed more and more ways to interfere with the software's rendering process. But for many years, any 3D game scene was going to look – or at least feel – stylistically and atmospherically much the same as all the others. Because no matter whether the wireframe and texture assignments were made by some fresh-faced CAD-jockey, Michelangelo, or your pet monkey, the same kind of largely 'colourised black-and-white ray tracing software' was going to render them in the same way using the same techniques without any intentional style of its own. I think we lost things – important things – whenever accelerating technological fixes and agendas overtook, and to some extent eclipsed, human creative navigation and intent. *Thimbleweed Park* was a way to re-engage a lot of that – for some of us – for a moment, anyway. I appreciate Ron, Gary, and all the others who helped make that happen once again.

"There are lots of things in Thimbleweed Park*'s graphic style that neither I, nor anyone, could have done way back in the late '80s, but they were all precisely the kinds of things I and the rest of us were trying to do when we first made* The Secret of Monkey Island*."*

62

1990

Operation Stealth

The name's Glames, John Glames. Known outside Europe as *007: James Bond - The Stealth Affair*, Delphine's follow up to *Future Wars* uses a recognisable pop-up verb command menu. Special agent gadgets are also needed to solve the game's many puzzles. The inclusion of arcade action sequences meant the game mirrored the spy films that inspired it.

63

1990

The Secret of Monkey Island
The game that's now synonymous with the point-and-click genre and a real fan's favourite. On Guybrush's hilarious quest to become a pirate there are so many iconic moments, such as sword fighting with insults, the tree stump Easter egg, the rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle... The list goes on and on. *The Secret of Monkey Island* set the benchmark for all future adventure games to live up to.

64

1990

▲ Along the way, Guybrush encounters many different characters in *The Secret of Monkey Island*. These iconic scenes include meeting Cobb from *Loom* whose badge is doing a neat bit of product cross-promotion.

65

1990

▲ As Guybrush passes through the wide and varied backgrounds of *The Secret of Monkey Island*, his sprite changes height. This gives each location an impressive sense of scale.

66

You fight like
a Dairy Farmer!

How appropriate!
You fight like a cow!

This is the END for you,
you gutter crawling cur!

And I've got a little TIP
for you, get the POINT?

I've spoken with apes more
polite than you!

I'm glad to hear you attended
your family reunion!

Soon you'll be wearing my
sword like a shish kebab!

First you better stop waving
it about like a feather duster.

I once owned a dog that
was smarter than you.

He must have taught you
everything you know.

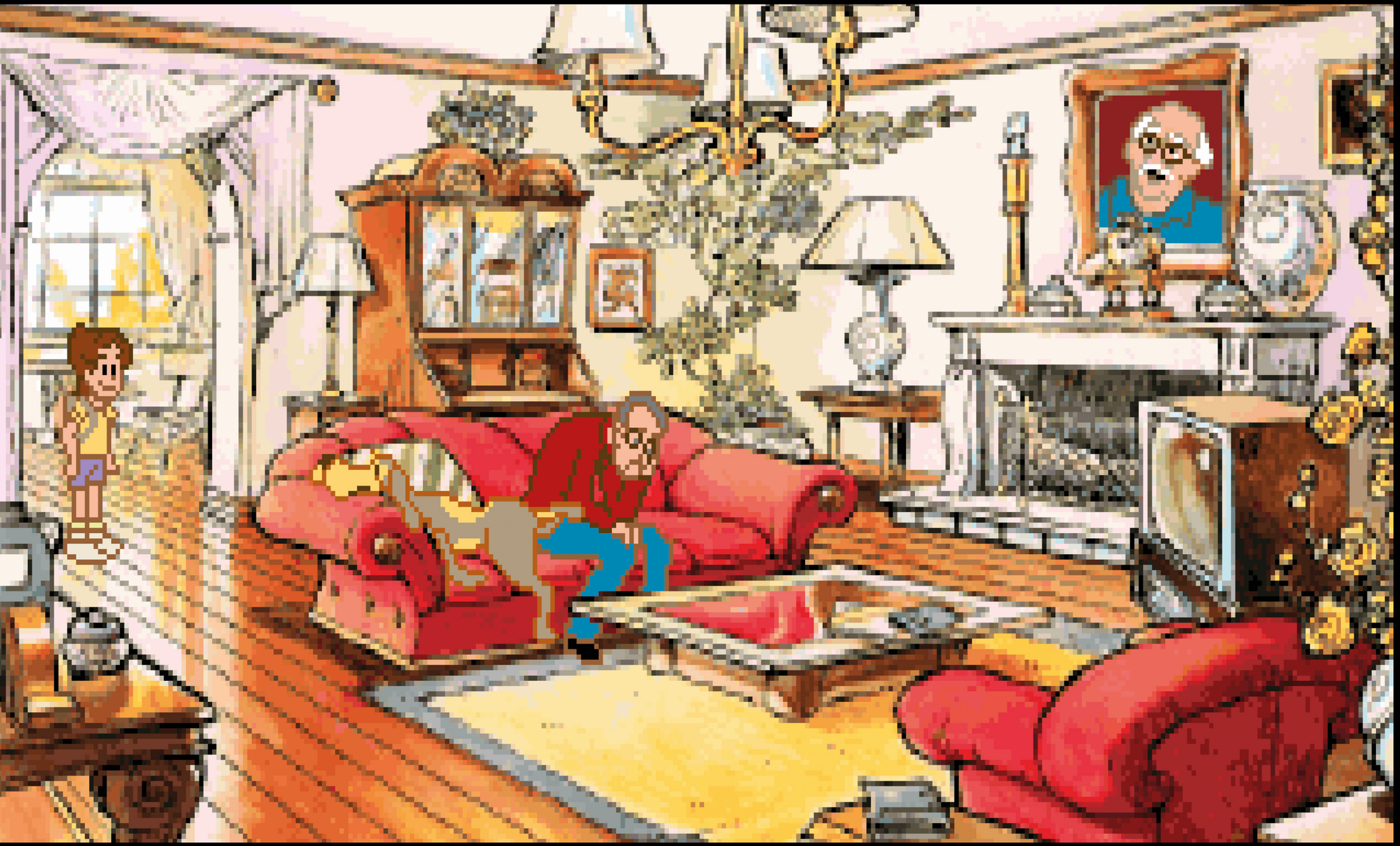
You make me
want to puke.

You make me think
somebody already did.

▲ Keeping things family friendly, the pirates in *The Secret of Monkey Island* fight with insults. The winner of a duel has the sharpest wit, rather than the quickest sword.

1990

1991



The Adventures of Willy Beamish

Most notable for its realistic cartoon-like graphics and digitised 256-colour backgrounds, *The Adventures of Willy Beamish* also featured some impressive fully-animated cut-scenes. Although criticised for its text-heavy dialogue, it did include some unique ideas such as the in-game clock that continues, even when no action is taken, meaning that many puzzles have to be solved within specific time windows.

68

Shawn Sharp

Released in 1991, *The Adventures of Willy Beamish* stood apart from the work of LucasArts and Sierra thanks to its gorgeous, cartoon-like sprites which towered over those seen in the likes of *King's Quest* and *The Secret of Monkey Island*. The title was made all the more remarkable by the fact that developer Dynamix was better known for its complicated simulations than its adventure titles. Art director Shawn Sharp was responsible for *Beamish*'s unique look, and would later work on the iconic *Space Quest* franchise.

When did you first decide that you wanted a career in video games?
Oddly enough, I turned the opportunity down at first. I had just moved from Pittsburgh to Portland, Oregon, and opened a graphic design and illustration business when Dynamix reached out to me about an opportunity to art direct computer games. It sounded kind of neat, but I had never even played a computer game, much less had any experience making them. So, I passed. A year later they reached out again and by that point I was a bit more tech savvy. I had even played a game or two on my Mac SE (okay, honestly, probably one). I loved the collaborative creative process of playing, and making, tabletop RPGs and saw how that could translate to the digital realm. I decided to give it a try to see how it worked out. That was about 28 years ago. I guess it's working out okay so far.

Before working on *The Adventures of Willy Beamish*, were you a fan of point-and-click adventure games?
Not much, really. I think I had played a little *King's Quest* but that would have been about it at that point. Strangely enough, I didn't even get heavily into playing video games until I'd been in the business for several years. I mean, I played them, but mostly for research. It didn't really become a passion for several years.

Did Sierra have much input into the development of *The Adventures of Willy Beamish* or was it largely left to Dynamix?
They were aware of it of course, but I don't recall much in the way of input from them. Although, I suspect that it would have mostly gone through Dynamix co-founder Jeff Tunnell, so they may have been more involved than I'm remembering.

What was your role in the development?
On *Willy* it would have been pretty much all art-related. I don't recall getting that involved in story and design until *Space Quest*, *Tribes*, *Starsiege* and then, after the Dynamix days, titles like *Guild Wars*.

Why did you choose a cartoon art style?
I think we were going for a sort of Saturday morning, Disney-type style. I recall in laying out the backgrounds I was trying to emulate that Disney sort of scene-framing whenever possible; darker foreground objects that draw the eye to the centre of the screen where the action is happening. Of course, since we were trying to reuse animation as much as possible, and this was before the days of 3D games, the pathable areas had to all be laid out in roughly the same parts of the image. Process-wise, we would draw the backgrounds out by hand, and make copies that we would paste onto illustration boards. Rhonda Conley would paint them, and then we would scan them in. Bear in mind, this was before we were using things like Photoshop and Wacom tablets in game development; it was an interesting time where traditional skills were transitioning over to the digital realm. Of course, it was also in the 8-bit days so we only had 256 colours to work with. The super-low resolution and low frame rate of the time in turn largely dictated the final look of the art. That said, as an artist, it can be a rather fun challenge to work within limitations and see things evolve from what you imagine in the discovery phase of development to the final in-game result.

After years of working on AAA titles I'm currently working on *Minecraft* at Microsoft. It's fascinating seeing how our artists can tell visual stories with so few pixels. It takes a really different skill set than doing so with a virtually unlimited palette and poly count.

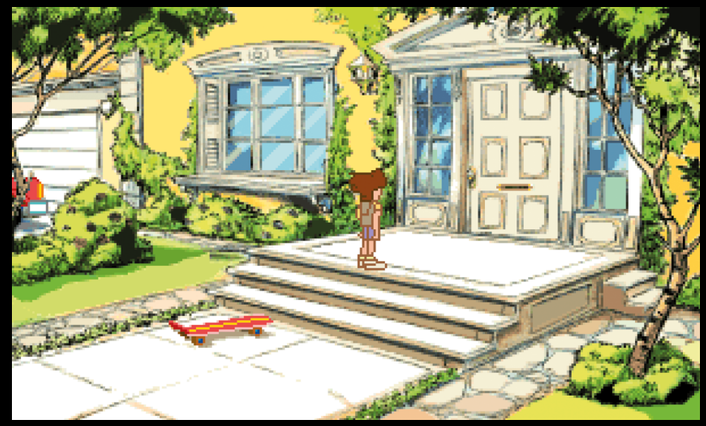
Was it hard to produce animated drawn graphics given the hardware limitations back in 1991?
It was indeed. A big part of it was figuring out just what those limitations were; it was a learning experience all around. We were working with a couple of animators that had done animation for film and were of course not accustomed to dealing with the limitations of game animation at the time. But the process for much of it was not too unlike that of traditional cel animation. We would draw things out, trace over them on an animation light table and then, unlike scanning the backgrounds in, I seem to recall we had a camera of some sort set up to capture each frame. Then we would paint the cells in Deluxe Paint Animation to create the sequence; some animations were done from scratch in Deluxe Paint.

Are you proud of your work on *The Adventures of Willy Beamish*?
You know, I am. That and *Space Quest* are a couple of the games that I look back to even today with fond memories of the team of artists, designers and programmers we had assembled and what we were able to accomplish. It was a lot of fun and a real learning experience. Not being much of a computer gamer at the time and, of course, being before the Internet, I didn't have a great deal of insight into how it compared to other, similar titles at the time. As an artist though, it was a lot of fun to collaborate on telling a story. To this day this is my main motivating factor for working in games. I love working with folks of various disciplines, backgrounds and perspectives to tell a story and see how it evolves during production.

You then worked on *Space Quest V*. Were you a fan of the series?
I was familiar with it but don't think I had actually played any of the others in the series. It was of course one of the big Sierra titles, so I was aware of it but didn't become really familiar with it until Mark Crowe transferred from Sierra to Dynamix. Of course, once it was decided we would be doing *Space Quest V* I started doing my research.

What was your role in the development?
I was the art director and so designed all of the characters, locations, did some animation and even got to be involved in some of the design work. I also played one of the bridge crew, an alien. Well, 'played' in the sense that we wore costumes and filmed ourselves moving around, and that was then digitised and painted over for much of the animation. It was basically a strange version of rotoscoping; sort of 'rotoscoping meets 8-bit digital'.

Were *Space Quest* creators Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy involved in the development?
Mark was there at Dynamix. We didn't work with Scott that I recall, but I think he may have left Sierra by that time, I'm not sure. It was a real blast working with Mark. Other than being a hell of a nice guy, he was just exactly what you wanted in a game designer and director.



▲ Willy Beamish on the doorstep of his house, about to embark on his adventure.

▲ Roger Wilco runs into trouble on the planet Thrakus in *Space Quest V*.

***Space Quest V* was praised for its graphics. Was it essential to evolve the graphical style from the previous game in the series?**
You know, I don't recall this being a specific goal so much as a natural progression as we explored what we wanted to do with the game. I'm also a huge science fiction fan so tried to tie things into some of the classic sci-fi properties like *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Aliens*, *Star Wars*, *Silent Running* and various comic books, book covers and so on. Obviously, we wanted to keep it in the *Space Quest* family, but we had a lot of leeway. Of course, we were still limited by the minimum specs and technology of PC games of the time, so there was only so much we could do to progress things. But I think, simply by virtue of paying homage to various science fiction properties and tropes, things evolved.

Which applications did you use to create your pixel art?
These were the days of Deluxe Paint and Deluxe Paint Animation! The game engine was written by Sierra and then modified internally for our needs. A fun thing with *Space Quest* was that, while we had some traditional cel animation, we also did a lot of it with live actors. For Roger Wilco, Sean Murphy, one of the artists on the project, spent a whole lot of time in costume and a wig. As an inside joke, we spoofed this process in the *Galactic Enquirer* that we published along with the game. It shows me holding Sean's face on a scanner as Mike Janke scans him into the computer.

Did you work on any other point-and-click adventure games?
I think *Space Quest* was the last of them I worked on. Actually, we had started a *Willy Beamish 2* but it was never released. We had gotten pretty far into it so I'm not sure why the studio chose not to see it through. I was only doing the backgrounds so wasn't overly involved in the business side of things, but it was coming along really well from what I recall. After that I moved onto *Tribes*, *Starsiege*, *Outpost 2*, *A10*, *Cyberstorm* and others. Other than a few freelance projects here and there, I think the closest to that type of game would have been *Jimmy Neutron* for the PlayStation 2.

1991

Cruise for a Corpse
In this Agatha Christie-inspired adventure, the player investigates a murder aboard a cruise ship. During play the command menu is notably absent; instead the cursor changes appearance when moved over an interesting object. This meant more available space on screen for a large player sprite, and a more cinematic experience. The fluid vector graphic animation looked great for the time but is somewhat let down by the outdated EGA graphics.

70

Paul Cuisset

As the guiding force behind *Future Wars*, *Operation Stealth* and *Cruise for a Corpse*, French developer and designer Paul Cuisset did much to help shape the direction of the point-and-click genre in the late '80s and early '90s. He would later create *Flashback*, one of the most successful European action platformers of the 16-bit era. 1995's *Fade To Black* took the series into full 3D before Cuisset shifted focus to racing titles with the *Moto Racer* franchise. He rebooted *Flashback* in 2013 and released a fourth *Moto Racer* outing three years later.

How did you first become interested in computing and computer games?
I started working with computers in 1983. I was a student in Computer Studies, working on big mainframes, but I was really interested in the microcomputers that were coming out at that time. There was the Apple II and the Commodore 64 – and while I was studying and learning programming, I tried to play some games and discovered a whole new universe, because the computer I was learning on was about mainly calculating things and so on. When I discovered that it was possible to play with computers, it opened a door for me; it was something really, really exciting.

What sort of video games did you play?
The first games I played were on the Apple II – games like *Lode Runner* and *Lady Tut*. There were adventure games, too. At that time they were text adventure games, so you had to type the words, and that was really eye-opening. The way you had to type in things was, for me, something really extraordinary, because it was like talking to somebody – talking to the computer. I think, today, we have lost that a little.

How did you land your job at Delphine?
I never thought about a career in video games. But I wrote a game with some friends and presented it to a company called Elite in England, and they gave us the opportunity to do the conversion of a game called *Space Harrier* by Sega. So, I did *Space Harrier* on the Atari ST. After that, I had contact with Paul de Senneville, who wanted to create a games software company in France. He was looking for developers but, at that time, I didn't want to be part of the company; I still wanted to be independent. So I proposed that I create a game for them, and I looked for an artist to work with me. We created a game called *Les Voyageurs du Temps* – in English it was called *Future Wars*. After the release of the game, Delphine proposed I join the team, and I joined as Vice-President for Creation.

The artist you created *Future Wars* with was Éric Chahi, who went on to design *Another World* (aka *Out of this World*) for Delphine. How did you end up working together?
I was looking for an artist for this game, because I'd written the storyline but the artist I used to work with was going into the army for a year. I asked friends if they knew a good artist, and I saw several different people, but Éric was the best… it was obvious, he has a really unique touch. Éric did all the graphics, and I did the programming, so it was quite separate. We'd get together every couple of weeks and talk about the next steps to take. Then he would go home and work on his stuff. We would get together at the next meeting, and he'd show me what he'd done and we'd speak about how to integrate his art. We worked for about a year on this game, and it was a very straightforward process.

"I never thought about a career in video games. But I wrote a game with some friends and presented it to a company called Elite in England, and they gave us the opportunity to do the conversion of a game called Space Harrier by Sega. So, I did Space Harrier on the Atari ST."

What was the inspiration behind *Future Wars*?
I'm a fan of science fiction, so I wanted to tell a story about time-travelling, and I wanted to have an adventure that was quite epic. I had this story about a war in the future with aliens, the Crughons, who want to destroy the human race. And they go back in time and drop bombs in different periods, and the hero has to stop them. I did some research about the dinosaurs and how they disappeared, and it was quite fun to imagine that you were involved in this event. It was written very fast; I wrote the whole story in a weekend.

Why did you decide to make the game a point-and-click adventure?
I was a big fan of the Sierra games – the *King Quest's* series, *Space Quest* and so on. I had played a lot of their games, but at that time on the PC you still had to type the words, like the old games on the Apple II. At that time I was working on Atari ST, and we had a fabulous mouse and that changed everything, so I wanted to create a simpler system. I was thinking about how I could create the same kind of interaction as with the keyboard, but with the mouse. I chose to do something with just five keywords. I think *Future Wars* was really one of the first point-and-click adventures, because of this mouse-controlled system. We also had many more colours on the Atari, so the art could be better than what was done at that time on PCs.

Did you work closely with Éric to define the distinctive graphic style?
I did drawings of the different scenes, how they would appear, and the actions in the game, then gave him these storyboards so he could draw the final sketches and art. We only had 16 colours so it was very hard to do something really interesting. But the difference is so big between what I did and what he did! He was really ahead of his time, I think. An interesting idea Éric had with the art was to keep the proportions. At the beginning he told me, "I think, if a room is small, we should draw it small, and if it's big we should take up the whole screen." And that really added a sense of dimension into the game.

Is it true that *Future Wars* was meant to be the first in a series of games?
Yes. In fact, when I created the game, we had plans for the other games, but it was difficult because after the game finished Éric wanted to work on his own game, and I think he was right to do so.

Was Delphine pleased with the finished game? And how did it do, in terms of sales?
Yes, it really performed well, and we had good reviews. In France, particularly, it was successful because it was one of the first games in French, and the game sold well for quite a long period of time. We also had success in the US, where we had Interplay as a distributor of the game. Brian Fargo came to France and saw it and told us he wanted to distribute it. At that time it was very easy, because one day you have Brian Fargo calling you to say, "I am interested in your game, I've seen it and I like it, so where do I sign?"

***Operation Stealth*, your second point-and-click adventure game, was renamed *James Bond: 007 – The Stealth Affair* for its North American release. Why was this?**
I was very frustrated about this because if I had known at that time that it would be a James Bond game, I would have done a proper James Bond game. The original *Operation Stealth* was really a parody of spy films, and spy methodology. I mean, it says, "I'm Glames, John Glames". And for the fans it's not very good because we didn't have the look or clothes of James Bond in *Operation Stealth*. So, at that time, I was quite opposed to the idea, but Interplay wanted to.

▲ A scene from *Future Wars* showcasing Éric Chahi's unique art style and excellent use of perspective.

rebrand the game to use the James Bond license in the US. I think it's probably good that we didn't have the Internet at that time, because I think an older James Bond fan would have cried...

"I was thinking about how I could create the same kind of interaction as with the keyboard, but with the mouse. I chose to do something with just five keywords. I think Future Wars *was really one of the first point-and-click adventures, because of this mouse-controlled system."*

Would it be fair to say you missed the talents of Éric Chahi on that game?
Yes, I did the programming, scenario design and gameplay, and we worked with two different artists, one for the characters and one for the backgrounds. The style was certainly very different from *Future Wars*.

You also added action mini-games, a feature that often divides opinion among adventure gamers...
We put in lots of mini-games. In *Future Wars* we had one where you have a shoot-out with the Crughons, but in *Operation Stealth* maybe we had too many. I think those mini-games were there to add some action because it was a spy game, but it was quite difficult to get the balance right.

Like *Future Wars* and the later *Cruise for a Corpse*, *Operation Stealth* made use of Delphine's 'Cinematique' game engine. Was it important with your games to try to create movie-like experiences for players?
Yes, I think it was the purpose of the engine, to be able to have all those cutscenes and the cinematic style. It was the same engine that we used in *Future Wars*, but I just added some improvements. In the '80s and '90s we didn't want to do movies, but they were the inspiration because the language of the movie was what gave us emotions, and we were trying to convey these emotions through those cutscenes – especially when you were playing with a small character that was just a bunch of pixels. We were not cinematographers, so it was difficult to also tell a story. It's not always easy to mix story and gameplay. We were learning a lot at that time and the balance wasn't perfect. We were just programmers and artists; we made a lot of mistakes, but the public was happy because they liked the games and they gave us the opportunity to work and try to do better things.

***Operation Stealth* wasn't as well received as *Future Wars*. Why do you think this was?**
In the press it was not so well received because the artistic part was not as strong as in *Future Wars*; the subject was different, and maybe because it was the second game we did. But it did okay, because Delphine had a lot of fans who had played and really liked *Future Wars*.

Your final point-and-click adventure for Delphine was *Cruise for a Corpse*, a murder mystery with an intriguing historical setting. What was your role in development?
Cruise for a Corpse was a very complicated project because when I started working at Delphine we had launched development on two games. One was *Operation Stealth* and the other was *Cruise for a Corpse*, which turned out to be very difficult. After we finished *Operation Stealth*, the game was still not very advanced, and there were a lot of defects. So I decided to completely rewrite the game system and the cinematic engine, and we started from scratch. So it's a completely different engine from the other two adventure games.

The story is set in 1920's France, which was quite a departure from your previous adventures. Why did you pick this era, and what attracted you to it?
I like to do things that I haven't done before, and it was hard work because it's mainly a game with dialogue; an Agatha Christie-style 'whodunnit' with lots of characters, and lots of different interactions between the characters. The thing that was quite new was the dialogue system, where you can talk to somebody, and he or she gives you a new subject that you can use to ask other questions to other people. I wrote the story and all the dialogue over six months and it was very painful, like writing a book! But it was very interesting to write, because it was complex – much more complex than any of the stories I had written before.

***Cruise for a Corpse* has an unusual time mechanic which feels quite contemporary to modern games, with a clock that advances as you uncover clues and gather information on the case. Why did you decide to implement this feature?**
It was very important to the structure of the game. The story is like a tree of possibilities, but time isn't linked exactly to the story. If you complete an action, then time will advance, but time doesn't advance because an action was necessarily the right one; I'm not sure I made that really clear. But it was a way to advance the story because,in the previous games, when you were advancing in the plot, your surroundings changed because you'd probably entered a new screen location. In *Cruise for a Corpse* you are on a boat, so you don't know when you've advanced in the plot, because you stay in the same rooms. I felt that we needed to add something that explained to the player that they have advanced, so that's why I added the clock.

Visually, the game has a unique way of rendering the player character compared to other adventures of its time, allowing for some very cinematic zooms and close-ups. How was this achieved?
We used vector graphics, because we wanted to give a sense of 3D. We wanted to have scenes where the character walks towards – and comes through – the screen, and we tried with sprites, but they were too pixellated when we tried to zoom, so we ended up using vector drawings. We had to develop tools to animate those vector drawings, which was a lot of work, and we had to take the character sprite and convert it into polygons by hand. But I think it was important to be able to zoom in closer to the character and see their face when you play the game, because we wanted to be closer to the characters and to their emotions.

Given the more cerebral, dialogue-heavy feel of *Cruise for a Corpse* compared to *Future Wars* and *Operation Stealth*, was the game as commercially successful?
Well, I'm quite surprised that I meet a lot of people who say, "Oh, I really liked *Cruise for a Corpse*", because I don't think that the game performed as well as the two others. I think that was because it was pretty complex; there's a lot of text, and it's a very different kind of game. The others were more like Hollywood productions, and this one was more like an independent production or something. So there was less appeal, I think, to the mass market.

PAUL CUISSET INTERVIEW

"We used vector graphics, because we wanted to give a sense of 3D. We wanted to have scenes where the character walks towards – and comes through – the screen, and we tried with sprites, but they were too pixellated when we tried to zoom, so we ended up using vector drawings. We had to develop tools to animate those vector drawings, which was a lot of work, and we had to take the character sprite and convert it into polygons by hand."

After *Cruise for a Corpse* you went on to further commercial and critical success with the sci-fi platform game *Flashback*, but do you look back on the three adventure games you produced for Delphine with fondness? And do you perhaps have a favourite?
I really like *Future Wars*. I think because it was the first one, and it was really fresh. Of course, I like all the games I've made, but with *Future Wars*, I really like the story and the whole universe; I think it was really interesting. And the art is so beautiful. I think even today it's still good.

What are your feelings on that classic era of point-and-click adventures compared to the kind of games that are being produced nowadays?
Some people say the point-and-click genre has died, but I think that they have just changed. When we play *Uncharted*, it kind of gives you the same feeling, the story and the characters. How they evolve in the story, how they evolve in the game. And now it's more and more present, because we can have proper close-ups. If you have played *The Last of Us* you'll know this – all these games are so centred around the characters, because the characters are important; they live the whole story.

▲ Nice use of light and shadow in *007: James Bond - The Stealth Affair*.

▲ Scenes from *Cruise for a Corpse* that use a mixture of pixel and vector graphics.

1991

Gobliiins

While most adventure games focus on story telling, *Gobliiins* instead presents 22 single screen point-and-click style puzzles. These are solved by taking advantage of the different skills of three goblins (Oups, Ignatius and Asgard). Pierre Gilhodes' unique visuals were inspired by tales of European folklore. The three 'i's in the title are a reference to the number of playable characters.

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Pierre Gilhodes

Famous for his trademark comic style, French artist Pierre Gilhodes created the *Gobliiins* series, a bizarre lineage of adventure titles packed with strange puzzles and even stranger characters. He followed these games with *The Bizarre Adventures of Woodruff and the Schnibble* in 1994, a cult graphic adventure which shares many similarities with *Gobliiins* but doesn't occupy the same universe. Gilhodes has recently resurrected some of his characters via his personal YouTube channel, Woodruff Cosmik Cartoon.

Did you show any artistic tendencies when you were younger?
Of course. I've always been a keen consumer when it comes to image and cinema; I drew my own comics at a very young age, but I also filmed small films of animations, one picture after the other, often in Plasticine. As a teenager, I published my comic strip fanzine. A Slovak friend, Laco Jofre Orosz, publishes my old comics in his newspaper, *Bubliny*.

How did you become involved in the world of video games?
It was quite by chance that I knocked on Coktel Vision's door in 1989, when I'd barely touched a computer. It was a period of creative profusion, dozens of games were released every week, from the most incongruous to the most brilliant! Publishers were not afraid to invest in original projects. I loved this world of graphics and interactivity.

Can you tell us how the idea of *Gobliiins* came to you?
Roland Oskian, Coktel Vision's boss, was looking for an original subject and, with Muriel Tramis, we made several proposals – starting with an action game where the gnomes mounted each other to reach their opponents. We naturally turned to the adventure genre to develop a personal universe. My first screenplays were turned down for being too crazy. At the time, some found it difficult to get out of the 'knight who saves the princess' theme for Heroic Fantasy.

Did you intentionally try to create a game that combined puzzles with adventure?
The pleasure was to find amusing scenes that led to original puzzles. Many players found my logic system strange, yet it was perfectly coherent to me.

What was the process of creating the main characters and the story?
The personalities of the three *Gobliiins* were very simple. The user, taciturn; the brawler, strong; the magician, cheerful. I further developed their characteristics in my aborted project *Gobliiins 5*, so that I could make a richer narrative. At the time, we didn't have time to do the cinematics we had planned. I was the only graphic designer on the first *Gobliiins*, but I had a little help on the next two. The story of *Gobliiins 2*, which focuses on Prince Bouffon, is taken from one of my old comic strips, where the son of the Frog King was kidnapped; detective Conak MC Coke led the investigation in a medieval-animal universe. When I was younger, my stories were more violent and cruel; I softened it all by playing video games. We also wanted to make the gameplay evolve by having two contradictory characters, Fingus and Winkle.

What was your inspiration for the art style?
Years of comic book reading no doubt, Gotlib in the newspaper *Fluide Glacial*, Franquin and thousands of others! I am still a great reader of European and American comic books, but I've always had my own odd graphic style; I wasn't too comfortable working on educational software, which Coktel Vision produced a lot of.

Can you talk about how you created the pixel art? Did you also participate in the animation?
The first *Gobliiins* was made using the mouse – which is unthinkable now – on an Amiga, using the package Deluxe Paint. It was a huge step forward when the first tablets arrived, even the very basic ones. I did almost all the animations for the first three *Gobliiins* titles, except some of the cinematics in the third game. The characters were separated into pieces and reconstituted so they could be animated. That's why the three *Gobliiins* have the same body, to save on space. Limiting the data and display area was an obsessive obligation at the time.

Which part of *Gobliiins* are you most proud of?
I have a special fondness for *Gobliiins 3*, because we were starting to become more technically mature, and we could offer lots of things without the programmers yelling at us! That's why it is full of interactive characters; Winonna, Blount's friend, Chump the parrot, Oya the little magician, Fulbert the snake… and why the main character, Blount, often changes his appearance: sometimes he has wings, we move his shadow, his reflection, he changes into a werewolf, we move his two hands, and so on.

"I am still a great reader of European and American comic books, but I've always had my own odd graphic style; I wasn't too comfortable working on educational software, which Coktel Vision produced a lot of."

Were you surprised when *Lost Vikings* used a game mechanism very similar to the three-player mechanics in *Gobliiins*?
Yes, it was surprising for us, but their game was more puzzle-oriented than ours. It was very efficient and friendly.

In 2009, you created a *Gobliiins 4*, this time in 3D. How was the experience?
It was a great experience that led me to Russia. I liked the script, but I should have done it in 2D, the players would have preferred it. I got back to working in 2D via an animation series for my YouTube channel, Woodruff Cosmik Cartoon.

You also worked on *The Bizarre Adventures of Woodruff and the Schnibble*. How did this come about?
We wanted to make a richer, less linear game; we had a whole world to invent. Woodruff was a child in an adult body. He discovered the city at the same time as the player. This game had a marked effect on players for its delirium and all the problems we deal with in it. I hear about it even more often than the *Gobliiins* series! I even have a fan who got a Schnibble tattoo on her foot. I invented for this game the Bouzouk race, of which Winkle in *Gobliiins 2* was a precursor. I am very attached to these creatures.

The art seems to be inspired by *Gobliiins* – was that your plan?
I certainly hope that *Woodruff*, a lanky clansman dressed as a punk, is a worthy son of the *Gobliiins*! The programming technique was more elaborate, the animation phases were coded by difference, which allowed us to have richer and more fluid movements, and CD-ROM allowed us to have a lot more animations.

What would you say have been the highlights of your career so far?
The three *Gobliiins* and *Woodruff*, for sure. Then I learned 3D and became an animator on many projects. Now I am still passionate and determined to keep my characters alive. After my YouTube channel, I have returned to my first love, the comic strip.

Can we expect a *Gobliiins 5*?
I wish I could! The script is ready, but I might have to learn programming!

"I have a special fondness for Gobliiins 3, *because we were starting to become more technically mature, and we could offer lots of things without the programmers yelling at us!"*

▲ Level designs from *Gobliiins* showcasing Pierre's unique art style.

▲ Environments from *The Bizarre Adventures of Woodruff and the Schnibble* that are unmistakably by Pierre.

1991

Leisure Suit Larry 1: In the Land of the Lounge Lizards
This 1991 remake by Sierra replaced the original text parser with the SCI icon-based engine, while the VGA graphical overhaul meant Larry more closely resembled the short, large-headed man that Al Lowe always envisaged. The jokes remained bawdy and crass, with the lounge lizard lothario as endearingly pathetic as ever.

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▲ During *Leisure Suit Larry 1: In the Land of the Lounge Lizards*, Larry encounters beautiful women such as Faith and Fawn.

▲ VGA background art from *Leisure Suit Larry 1: In the Land of the Lounge Lizards*.

Police Quest III: The Kindred

Made using an updated version of the SCI engine, *Police Quest III: The Kindred* continues to follow the investigations of Sonny Bonds, with the emphasis on digital detective work. The player uses facial composition software and interactive maps to determine murder patterns. Like other Sierra adventures, this instalment uses a full mouse-controlled icon-based interface for interaction with the environments.

1991

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Robert Lindsley

Robert Lindsley joined Sierra in his teens, starting at the bottom of the ladder in the company's disk reproduction department. However, he soon worked his way up the ranks, and went on to contribute to titles such as *Code-Name: Iceman*, *King's Quest VI* and *Mixed-Up Mother Goose Deluxe*. Since leaving Sierra, he's worked on a variety of games including *Rock Band 3*, *Dance Central*, *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* and *Battlezone*.

Were you interested in computers from a young age?
I started working on computers in third grade in 1979. I was eight or nine years old and was invited to take a simple four-week maths course, but rather than books, the course was taught using an Apple II+. I was immediately hooked! Once I completed the math course, I was asked if I wanted to take a programming course at the local high school during the summer break. We didn't have a computer in the house, so I was ecstatic to get a lot of computer time. Once I finished the programming course, my parents bought me my own machine, and I've been making games ever since.

How did you first come to work at Sierra?
I grew up in Southern California, but when I was in eighth grade, my family moved to a small town in Central California called Bass Lake. At that point, I was programming my own games and had no idea we were moving close to where Sierra was located. After that, all I could do was dream about joining them as a programmer. Finally, while I was still in high school, I got my break. My parents had a friend who worked in Customer Support at Sierra, and she offered to get me an interview in the copy room. This was where the games were copied onto blank disks. Those disks then went into the game packaging, and the boxes were shrink-wrapped and sent to stores. In the middle of my interview for the copy room job, the person interviewing me had to run to a meeting and said he'd be back in about an hour. He asked if I wanted to play a game, and loaded up *Ultima II* on the Apple IIe. I knew the game very well and had recently finished it at home. In fact, I happened to have my saved game with me! Once he left the room, I loaded up my saved data. When the interviewer returned he saw I'd completed the game and gave me a job on the spot! I did that job for about six months before I went into QA, Engineering and ultimately becoming a producer, which is more or less what I'm still doing today.

Were you a fan of point-and-click adventure games by Sierra and LucasArts?
When I joined Sierra, there weren't really 'point-and-click' games yet. The original Sierra adventure games all required that you type, and the game would respond accordingly. When I started at Sierra, I was playing their games such as *Aquatron*, *Oil's Well*, *Mr Cool*, *Sammy Lightfoot* and *BC's Quest for Tires*. Of course, I was a huge fan of the early arcade games as well; I spent all my free time playing video games!

One of your first projects at Sierra was to convert *Police Quest II* to the Commodore Amiga. Can you tell us about this project?
Actually, my very first programming job at Sierra was to make *Silpheed* for the Tandy Color Computer 2 and 3. From there I was asked to port the Sierra games to the 68000 platforms (Mac, Amiga and Atari ST). SCI was still very new at the time, and the systems engineers were trying to bring it up to parity feature-wise with the PC version. There were a lot of glitches and issues, but we made it through. I was 17 when I shipped *Police Quest II*.

Was it a challenge to convert a DOS game to another system?
Once we collectively figured out the process, it was pretty straightforward. The original PC game engineers would create the games using SCI script and then compile the code. The compiled script would then be fed into an interpreter which ran the game. The systems engineers (Bob Heitman, Jeff Stephenson and Pablo Ghenis) were tasked with building the interpreter for all of the platforms. The most significant challenge was keeping the interpreter for the 68000 computers on par with the PC versions. The goal was to get the same compiled script to run on all versions of the interpreters, but, of course, it never worked out that way. There were bugs in the script that would need fixing, issues with the interpreter that would need debugging, and a host of other problems. The music would also need to be remastered for the platforms. Because the music chips on the 68000 computers were way more advanced than the PC, we had an opportunity to upgrade the music. I think it's one of the things that made the ports better than the original versions. Some of the biggest challenges involved making the games work on computers with low memory. For example, the Amiga 500 only had 512K of RAM, which often wasn't enough to run our games. I would need to change the game – sometimes significantly – to accommodate the low memory situation. Eventually, we had to drop Amiga 500 support because our games were too slow and unstable on it.

"Iceman was also the first time I was asked to program on the PC version of a game, so luckily I knew the code pretty well for the conversions. Still, I slept under my desk to get that one out the door!"

Which game was the most difficult to convert?
I would say *Iceman* was the most difficult. I had two weeks to get that game finished because Sierra needed it for their fiscal quarter. As a result, that game had the least amount of QA and engineering time dedicated to it. *Iceman* was also the first time I was asked to program on the PC version of a game, so luckily I knew the code pretty well for the conversions. Still, I slept under my desk to get that one out the door!

ROBERT LINDSLEY INTERVIEW

How did it feel to eventually get to program original games, such as *King's Quest V* and *VI*?
It was an incredible experience to work on the *King's Quest* series. When I was asked to join the *King's Quest V* team, I was 19 years old. I knew it was a fantastic opportunity, due in no small part to Ken and Roberta Williams, John Williams and Rick Cavin all working to support me. At the time it was like they all were my family and I was honoured they gave a 19-year-old kid from Bass Lake a chance to work on their flagship products. Working on those games was a blast, and I was able to work with some incredible people; Chris Iden, Chris Hoyt, Andy Hoyos, Cheryl Sweeney, Jane Jensen, Bil Skirvin, Carlos Escobar and countless other wonderfully talented people. I look back on those days very fondly! I have so many fond memories of working on those games. Not only was I learning how to make games professionally, but Sierra was also my social outlet. I made a lot of good friends with whom I still keep in contact. One year, I even had Christmas dinner with a bunch of my single Sierra friends!

What was Roberta Williams like to work with?
Roberta was amazing. When I began working on the *King's Quest* series, Roberta and I grew to be friends. I appreciated her creativity and ability to create these fantastic worlds. She gave the teams a lot of freedom to build a great game, and had a ton of passion around the products. I remember sending her and Ken a build of *King's Quest VI*, and they would call me up at nine or ten at night to talk about the game; what needed fixing and tweaking, what could be better, pretty much everything. Roberta's commitment to making great games has continued to resonate with me throughout my career.

Would you say Sierra was an inspiring place to work at back then?
I started at Sierra so young that it felt like I grew up there. I worked with so many amazing and talented people, and learned so much from them. When I joined Sierra, I was copying disks. When I left to join Microsoft, I was a seasoned producer working on huge titles; I owe everything to those early days at Sierra. We were at the forefront of gaming. We built products and experiences that nobody had ever seen before. By bringing designers, artists, engineers, musicians and testers together, we were able to make products that consistently blew people away. It was an awesome and inspiring time to be part of the gaming industry.

In 2013 you launched a crowdfunding campaign with *Police Quest* creator Jim Walls to create a new title called *Precinct*. How was this experience?
Jim and I had drifted apart after I moved from Oakhurst and we hadn't talked for years, so it was fun to reconnect with him. Working with him was great because he had tons of fabulous ideas. He really understood how technology had advanced and what we could do now that couldn't be done back in the old days. We had decided against making *Precinct* a point-and-click game and instead made an attempt to modernise the genre. We wanted to keep the old-school gaming mechanics in place while creating this sandbox where the players could do anything they wanted, which would change the story. We were excited and proud of the new vision. Crowdfunding a game is tough, but I'm glad we went through the experience. Ultimately we weren't successful in raising the money we needed to get the game off the ground, but I have lots of great memories! I hope Jim gets to make that game because I think people would love it.

Do you still play point-and-click adventure games nowadays?
I remember Ken Williams telling me once to always stay ahead of the technology when choosing what to work on next. I've guided my career with that one piece of advice and picked projects that challenge me, so I'm always playing the latest games. Most recently I've been working in mobile and VR so I've been playing a lot of those games. I still play the point-and-click adventures when I'm feeling nostalgic, but I'm always looking for the next exciting thing.

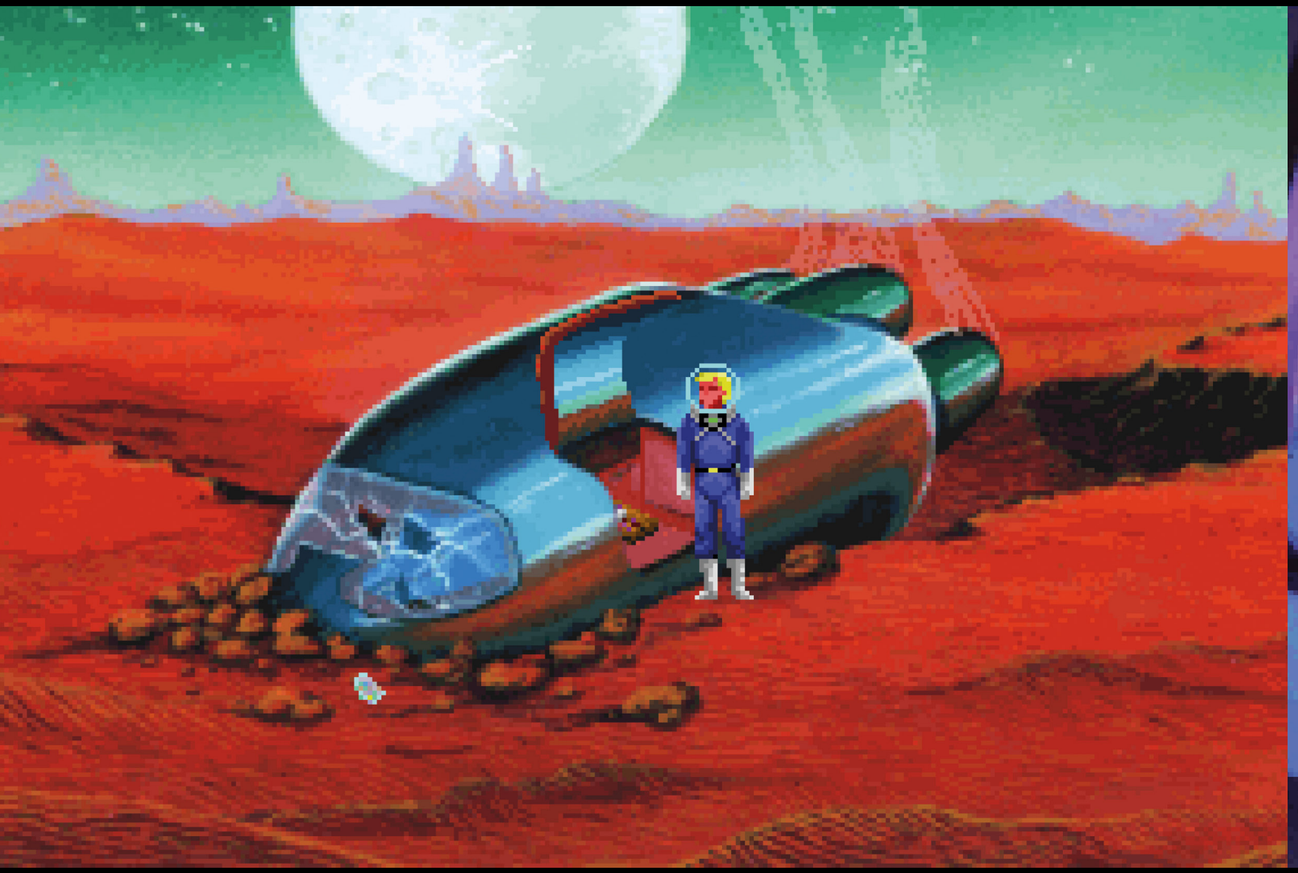
"I remember Ken Williams telling me once to always stay ahead of the technology when choosing what to work on next. I've guided my career with that one piece of advice and picked projects that challenge me, so I'm always playing the latest games."

▲ The Amiga conversion of *Police Quest II: The Vengeance*, coded by Robert.

Space Quest I: Roger Wilco in the Sarien Encounter

This remake of the original *Space Quest* has improved 256-colour graphics and enhanced audio support. Roger Wilco's name is now included in the game title, as all future games would as standard. The redrawn graphics have a suitably low budget sci-fi feel to them and work really well with the storyline. In other changes, the interface introduces some humorous actions such as 'Smell' and 'Taste'.

1991



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1991

Heart of China
This game's striking visuals are a mixture of digitised photos, hand-painted environments and carefully placed animated sprites. Remarkably there are never more than 256 colours on screen. Because of a restricted budget, developer Dynamix couldn't afford actors so the company's own employees and families were used instead. Reviews at the time praised the quality of the story and excellent graphics.

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1991

Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work

After infamously skipping an entry, this fourth title in the *Leisure Suit Larry* series uses the SCI1 game engine, and the would-be womaniser is now displayed in 256 colours for the first time. Larry is also navigated around the screen using a fully mouse-driven icon interface. The game has the dubious honour of being a Sierra game without deaths and dead ends to make it 'easier', after customer feedback showed that players rarely finished Sierra adventure games.

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Al Lowe

Al Lowe can list the roles of director, actor, writer and photographer on his packed CV, but it is his association with Sierra On-Line and the cult *Leisure Suit Larry* series which has given him international fame. He began his career as a music teacher before deciding to learn programming, producing titles like *Dragon's Keep* and *Troll's Tale* on the Apple II. In 1983 he joined Sierra and worked on games including *King's Quest III* and *Police Quest*. However, his big break arguably came with the inception of Larry Laffer, a balding, middle-aged no-hoper whose single goal in life is to get laid.

How did you first become interested in video games, and what attracted you to the adventure genre?
Well, I got an Apple II because I had an idea for a software package. And when I wasn't thinking about programming the package I was trying to create, I bought some games. I had games that my son and I could play. He was five and I was thirty-five... We couldn't really play arcade games or twitch games – the games we could play together were adventure games because I could read, and he could decode the solutions and tell me what to type. So, we ended up playing a lot of games together.

What made you want to get into making adventure games yourself?
After my son and I ended up playing adventures I thought, "There must be a market for educational adventure games." There were products on the market but, at that time, they were geared to schools and were dry as dust, and no fun. I thought, "What if I did an adventure game that was also valid educationally?" Some of the staff at the school I was teaching at had published their own programs, mainly educational workbooks. So I said to them, "Could you write a story for a programming project?", and so that's what we did. They wrote a story, and I figured out how to put in clues and program it. The smart thing that I did was to create an editor that manipulated the data because I wanted players to have to type in all the words and all their decisions. So I built an editor that would do all that stuff and then I wrote a [text] interpreter... it was crazy advanced for its time and purpose but I didn't know any better, it just seemed obvious. That became my first game, *Dragon's Keep*.

How did you end up working at Sierra On-Line, which went on to publish your famous *Leisure Suit Larry* series?
In November of '82, I went to the last Apple Fest, and everybody in the country with anything to do with Apple was there. Every publisher had a ten-foot booth in the back of the corner... I met with Sierra and they said, "You know, your stuff looks great. Let us publish it and you write more games. You don't need to be a games seller." By that time, we had had a few orders and we were tired of packaging things, buying boxes, waiting for the UPS man to show up, stuff like that. So, I thought, "Maybe I should be an author and have a single publisher." We talked with at least ten publishers at that show. And several of them made offers, but Sierra had the best and the highest royalty rate, and they were the largest in the business at the time. They also did the most advertising. So I signed up for what turned out to be the next 16 years...

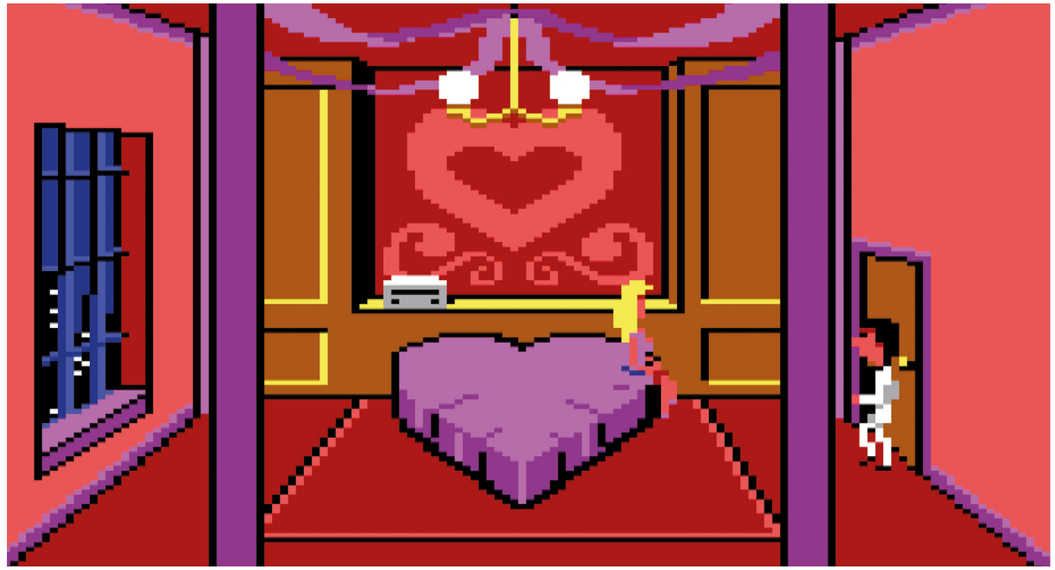
"They had a hell of time finding artists because it seemed like people who were interested in art had no interest whatsoever in computers."

You were previously a music teacher, and you got into computer programming quite late. Do you feel that your sense of creativity and talent as a musician helped your transition into designing games?
I remember thinking I was too late to do something. But there's something about us old guys compared to young guys. They have computer training and they know maths, and I don't know any of that stuff. But the difference was that I understood how to stage a musical because I'd been a musical director for years. I was a professional musician. I was the guy on the microphone with the band. And I understood about pleasing an audience. So where I was behind in coding, I was ahead in entertainment and presentation.

AL LOWE INTERVIEW

How did you find working with computer graphic artists in the early days of Sierra?
They had a hell of time finding artists because it seemed like people who were interested in art had no interest whatsoever in computers. And it was something so rare, artists who would even accept that we could create art through this medium. I remember vividly that there was one guy who was working at Sierra and he worked the whole day on this background screen for a game, and the power went out. I said to him, "Wait, what? You didn't save this?" And he said, "No, I wasn't done." That's where I came up with the phrase "Save early, save often". What's interesting is that when [Sierra co-founder] Ken Williams bought an Apple II (about 1978, very early on) as soon as the Apple graphics tablet came out he ordered one because Roberta [Williams] wanted to write a game that had artwork. So he bought the Apple graphics tablet, but there was no software that ran on it. Literally, they sold a piece of hardware that did nothing when you got it open. So, he analysed the hardware and he created a program that would read the tablet and draw things on the screen. For years, that's what Sierra used to create artwork. It used vector graphics, and it even had a 'fill' so that if you touched the fill button and then tapped inside a shape it would fill that shape with colour. So it was very efficient. That's why we could do a game that stored so many images. But it was just four colours – six if you count black and white. Basically, Roberta wasn't an artist. She just drew stick figures... If you've ever seen *Mystery House*, you'll know what I mean! She said, "I want more colours. You've got to have more colours." And so Ken, besides inventing the graphics program, then said, "Well I can invent dithering!" And that's how he ended up with 21 on-screen colours.

How did you go from working on Disney titles like *Black Cauldron* and *Donald Duck's Playground* for Sierra to programming an adult-humour adventure game, *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*?
Well, I had just finished, I think, *Donald Duck*. And the truth of the matter was that, while we had the deal with Disney, the Disney titles didn't sell as well as our original titles. Back then, there was a real stigma that licensed property sucked. And people just tended not to buy licensed games even if they were good games, even though I think ours worked. (As far as I know, *Black Cauldron* was the first point-and-click adventure. In fact, its framework became the basis for the icons and point-and-click interface in *King's Quest IV*.) I said to Ken, "What are we going to do next?" And he said, "You know, *Softporn Adventure* [an adult text adventure by Chuck Benton] is a big seller. It was a huge hit back in the day." I think at the time Apple had sold 100,000 computers, Ken had sold maybe 25,000 copies of *Softporn*... He said, "What if we just updated that game and put graphics in it, maybe it would sell again." So, he gave me a copy and said, "Take it home and play it and see what you think." And I did, and it was just so out of touch... I mean in 1981 when it came out, it was the height of the free sex movement... But when I played the game, it was like, "Oh shit, this was okay back then, but now it's so old it should be wearing a leisure suit..." So, I said to Ken, "We can't just update it. We've got to make fun of this!" So, I added a protagonist, so there was a central character that you could see on the screen and move around and do things. But I still referred to him as 'you'. That was really a throwback to *Softporn Adventure*. But it got into your brain and it made you think, "I'm that little guy walking round in the street." Actually, I have no scientific research whatsoever to prove that works. On the other hand, I sold a lot of games...



▲ Larry and Fawn in the honeymoon suite in *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*.

How did the 'age verification' quiz in the first *Leisure Suit Larry* came about?
That was because of *Trivial Pursuit*. That was a board game which was popular at the time, and everybody was playing it, including my wife and me. It was 1987, and my son was one, and Ken's son was 13, and we didn't want either of them playing *Larry*! So we thought, "How can we keep kids out but in a fun way?" And *Trivial Pursuit* came to mind. So Ken and I wrote some of those questions, and so did Johnny Williams, his brother. I think Mark Crowe (co-creator of *Space Quest*), wrote some too. It was a community project.

"There were only three or four guys who knew how to use the graphics software at Sierra, and one of them was a born-again Christian, so he wouldn't work on Larry."

That 'quiz' really set the comedic tone. How important was it for you to make the game light-hearted and funny, in a world were Larry was basically pretty much outsmarted by every single woman he met?
Well, I hadn't been much to comedy clubs, but I read funny books and stuff. I enjoyed that. But I had never written anything like this. And the more I thought about it, the more I realised, "You know, there are no funny games. Maybe I should try and be funny." I didn't know how to be funny in a game. I had no model to follow, is I guess what I'm saying. And so every time I came up with something, I thought, "Well, maybe somebody will think that's funny", and I would throw it in. So *Larry* was really created entirely by gut feeling because I had no experience.

Can you tell us anything about how the art for Larry was created, particularly the eye-catching full-screen pin-up style portraits of the female characters?
That first game was pretty much done by just me and Mark Crowe, who was also working on *Space Quest* at the time. There were only three or four guys who knew how to use the graphics software at Sierra, and one of them was a born-again Christian, so he wouldn't work on *Larry*. So we made Mark an offer: "If you can do all the graphics for this game, including the animation and the backgrounds, credits and everything on screen... If you can get it done in four weeks, we'll give you a certain percentage of the profits. And if you spend five weeks, we'll give you 50 percent less, and if you spend six weeks, we'll give you two." So he was highly motivated. Remember, Mark was working 40 hours a week, full-time for Sierra. So, in his evenings and weekends, spare time, he worked on *Larry* and finished the entire thing in a month. He did everything from almost no instructions. Literally, I mean, it was, like, "Mark, whatever you think, whatever you want the characters to look like."

I remember, we were talking about the background screens once and it was, like, "Jesus! What's going to happen if somebody walks to the left or the right?" Because we didn't have a lot of time or money to create backgrounds. So, at the beginning of the game, outside Lefty's Bar, we put in a couple of alleys either side with a cartoon fight scene made up of four cells of animation, which the game would flash in random order if you wandered off. I came up with the idea for Larry [after dying] being lured into a chamber down below, through the lines on the pavement. And Mark came up with the idea of screwing the Larry heads onto new bodies, before he got sent back into the game.

The visual design of the lovable Larry Laffer changed rather dramatically as the series progressed and computer graphics technology improved didn't it?
Yes, when we started on *Larry* one, we had a choice if we wanted him to have a nose or not, because the pixels were huge. So he could either not have a nose at all, or he could have a gigantic nose. So, I said, "Oh well, let's use that." So we gave him a pixel nose which was huge, the size of his face. And then in later games, as the resolution increased, we thought it would be funny to make his nose look like a dick, and give him a very receding hairline, which seemed to recede even further with every game!

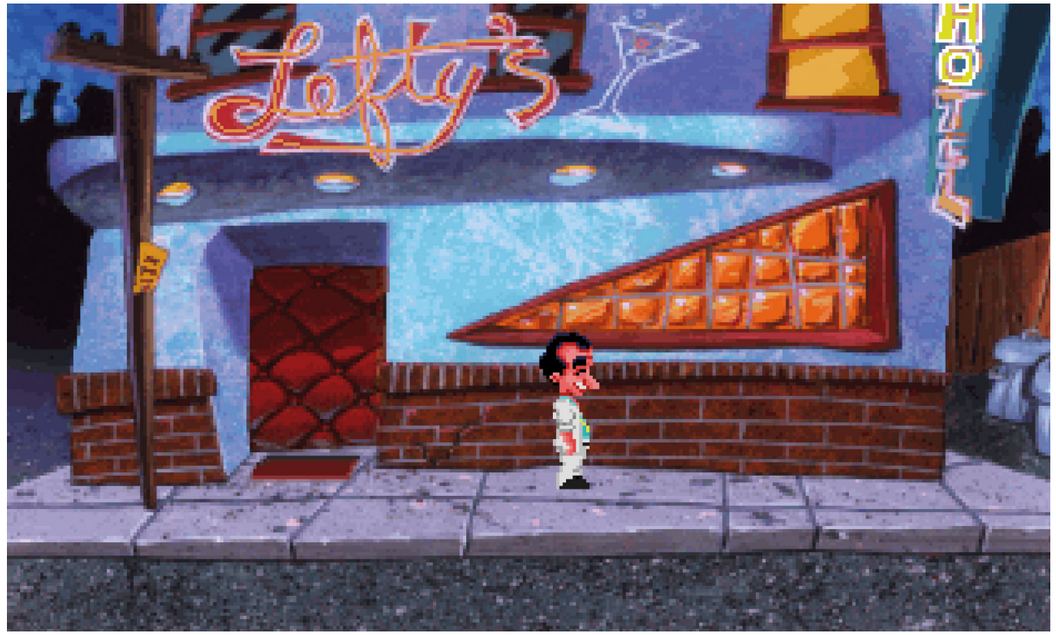
Which of the *Leisure Suit Larry* games was your favourite to work on?
Definitely *Leisure Suit Larry 7: Love for Sail*. When we started to design *Love for Sail*, I remember having the thought that this was the first game where I sat down before I started and said, "Yeah, I know how to do a game now". And it was really frustrating that it was the last one, because all through the games in the '80s and early '90s, I was thinking, "God, I hope nobody figures out that I don't really know how to do this." It was the easiest to do, and the closest to the original design as a finished product.

***Love for Sail* is by far the most visually accomplished of the classic *Larry* games, with its large, impressively animated characters and hand-drawn artwork. How did you find the process of creating the look of that game?**
After all those 16- and 256-colour games, which were very basic artwork apart from the full screen portraits, we really went full moon with *Larry 7*. I don't have a strong visual sense, so I relied on the artists. The female antagonists were all based on Hollywood characters. So we had Victorian Principles and Drew Baringmore... I just think we made a long list of actresses! We chose the ones that worked, and then we built the characters from their names. And then the artists built the look of each of them from their characteristics. So, what does that character look like if she's a country music singer, and her mother is a country music singer, and there's two of them? And so we came up with The Juggs...

***Torin's Passage* was another very ambitious project of yours – a fantasy adventure with cutting-edge character animation that looked like something from the Don Bluth arcade game *Dragon's Lair*. How did this game come about?**
Roberta was taking two years to do a *King's Quest* and we felt the need for a family game that would be suitable for younger players. The original idea was that it would be the first in a five-part series, and that Torin's 'passage' was a coming-of-age story. Then in part two he'd be a ruler. Part three was a challenge to the throne, and then the Emperor strikes back...

We hired a guy, Jim Murphy, who was a big Disney fan. He said, "Let's take it as close to a Disney cartoon as we can." So, we really tried to style it after the 'Golden Age' of film animation. But both *Torin's* and *Larry 7* had

▲ Larry shares a hot tub with Eve at the end of *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*.



▲ A much more detailed Larry Laffer outside Lefty's bar in the VGA remake of *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*.

▲ A scene from *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist* in which Freddy chats to the barman in the 'Golden Balls Saloon'.

▲ Larry gets overexcited after encountering a naked Drew Baringmore in *Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail!*

AL LOWE INTERVIEW

so much animation, and we didn't have the time or space to store it. Around that period, with of the fall of the Soviet Union, there were animators in Eastern Europe that were available and that could do good work for not much money. So we ended up hiring an animation team out of St. Petersburg in Russia. And they did a great job, although we did draw the key frames at Sierra, here in Washington. Sadly, we never got to make the sequels. Jim now works at Pixar [where he recently directed the short animation *Lava*].

"Well, I am proud of the games and the designs. For ten years or so we were at the leading edge of computer graphics and computer gaming. In the '80s and early '90s, Sierra was really a special place. My regret is that we didn't realise it at the time."

***Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist* was an interesting move from the risqué modern *Larry* settings into *Blazing Saddles*/Wild West territory for you. What made you want to do a comedy Western-themed adventure?**
I went to a restaurant with Ken, and it was next to a video store. Afterwards, we both decided to get some movies for the night. So we went into the video store together. We were standing by the Westerns, and I said, "Why don't we do a Western comedy?" And he goes, "Oh yeah, that's fine." And then I was at Roberta's house one day, and we were sitting in the living room talking, and I started saying he could be a farmer and I thought he could be a rancher, and my tongue got tied and I said he could be a pharmacist... And literally that must have been the inspiration. [To research the look of the game] I rented every funny Western I could find, from *The Singing Cowboy* to *Blazing Saddles*. You know, one of the highest compliments I ever received was one of the reviewers said it was the *Blazing Saddles* of the period...

When you first came up with Larry, did you imagine that, 30 years later, people would still be playing and talking about point-and-click adventures? And playing games like your recent mobile update of *Leisure Suit Larry*? That's quite some innings for a video game character that would now be approaching his 60s, to say the least!
Well, I am proud of the games and the designs. For ten years or so we were at the leading edge of computer graphics and computer gaming. In the '80s and early '90s, Sierra was really a special place. My regret is that we didn't realise it at the time. And then, after I retired in 1998, I started allowe.com, and, on a whim, put up a link to send me email. It's the best thing I ever did, because I have received hundreds of thousands of emails... People telling me about the experiences they had with the games, how they played with their friends, drank beer, laughed and had a good time. By doing something we loved to do, we ended up making millions of people happy. And that's a rare thing to get to say.

▲ This famous scene in Lefty's Bar is given a high-resolution makeover in 2013's *Leisure Suit Larry: Reloaded*.

1991

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

Expectations were high for this piratey sequel, which improved on the original game in every conceivable way. It still used the SCUMM engine, like its predecessor, but it was greatly streamlined with fewer verb commands. It was also the first game to use LucasArts' iMUSE system, which seamlessly blends the changing location music.

85

1991

▲ Hand-painted backgrounds from *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* show a wide variety of rich, vibrant locations

86

1991

▲ On his lengthy adventures in *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*, Guybrush meets many familiar faces from the previous game. Here, 'Men of Low Moral Fibre' have settled in Scabb Island.

87

Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers

This was the first *Space Quest* game to move away from a text parser and feature a full point-and-click interface. Additionally it featured 256-colour VGA graphics and full voice acting on the CD-ROM release. Although the puzzles can be frustrating, *Space Quest IV* does have an interesting feature allowing you to time travel to both past and (fictional) future *Space Quest* games, with the on-screen graphics changing to match the time period.

1991

88

1992

Curse of Enchantia

With no on-screen text, *Curse of Enchantia* is quite literally a graphic adventure. As there are no object descriptions, the game is probably best remembered for its abstract and often surreal puzzles. With an uncluttered screen, Rolf Mohr's beautiful hand-drawn backgrounds are presented in all their splendour, depicting a dreamlike fantasy world.

89

Billy Allison and Rolf Mohr

The now-defunct British studio Core Design is most famous for giving the world Lara Croft, but during the late '80s and early '90s it was a prolific creator of new IP which spanned a wide range of genres. Platformers like *Rick Dangerous* and *Chuck Rock* rubbed shoulders with action titles such as *Thunderhawk* and *Heimdall*, and Core even tried to mix things up in the burgeoning point-and-click genre with 1991's *Curse of Enchantia* and 1994's *Universe*. Billy Allison and Rolf Mohr were two of the studio's artists at the time.

When did you first know that you wanted a career in video games?
Billy Allison (BA): I think it was something I saw on British TV show *Tomorrow's World* that triggered the first idea in my head about working in video games. It was quite a while before anyone could own a games device, but I loved the idea of being able to transfer the role-play element of things I used to play as a kid into a computer game.

Rolf Mohr (RM): I didn't want a career in video games! After I did a degree in Architecture in Nottingham I was trying to become a book cover illustrator and contacted a few companies to ask about doing box cover art. Core Design was nearby in Derby, and was looking for someone to paint a ton of backgrounds which would be digitised and used in their game. I wanted to do it as an external contractor, but they threatened to tell my landlord I'd turned down a full-time job so I gave in to their blackmail and ended up working in-house. I did end up doing the box cover art too, as well as the hand-painted title logo. This would lead to my long career in games, while I kept my hand in doing freelance illustration and concept art for other things such as architecture, RPGs, toy and film design when I could.

Were you artistic as a child?
BA: Yes! I was always drawing and painting, modelling in Plasticine, and I even shot some stop motion animation with an old standard 8mm camera I had of a monster climbing over a railway setup someone had made in one of the school art rooms.

RM: I was always trying to draw as a young kid and seemed to have some talent. I then learned to improve my human figures from copying Marvel comics, and my parents started giving me private art lessons every Saturday before I was shipped off to boarding school, where they had a great art department and I developed my skills further. By age 17 I was doing sci-fi paintings such as 'Colossus' and eventually signed with an agency to do book covers.

Do you remember why Core Design decided to create a point-and-click adventure game?
RM: I joined the project after the basic idea and design was already in place, so I'm not sure what originally prompted them to do it. I know the guys enjoyed the Sierra and LucasArts-style games such as *Monkey Island*, *King's Quest*, *Space Quest* and others, so they were presumably excited and inspired to do something similar.

Were you involved in the early stages of *Curse of Enchantia*?
BA: I was on the project quite early on. It had already been designed, put it that way. I applied to work at Core at the right time, as they needed someone to do the animation. *Curse of Enchantia* was my first game for the company.

RM: The design – which would hardly be considered as such these days – was already figured out by the team of Rob Toone, Chris Long and Ian Sabine, who were great to work with. The one part that still wasn't quite firmed up was the name, which was 'Lenoria', if I remember right. I didn't get the meaning of the title so I suggested something more obvious like 'Enchantia', the boss liked it and added the 'Curse of'.

What role did you play in the development of *Curse of Enchantia*?
BA: I did most of the animation, with Stu Atkinson coming on board later. Also, I helped work out how animation would work technically within the game's puzzles.

RM: I was hired as the background artist. They gave me hand-written notes for each location which were extremely basic, mostly just a line or two describing the scene which was essentially just to support the particular puzzle that took place there. The seemingly random, whimsical choices of the scenes the team had come up with were definitely intentional; a kind of zany Pythonesque take on the classic fairy tales. It was a lot of fun working with a bunch of young guys like these, just making it up as we went along. I took their descriptions and fleshed them out, trying to add in as much creativity as I could. I also enjoyed collaborating with talented animators like Billy and Stu.

"I'd seen the game Another World on the Amiga and loved how fluid and animated the playable character was, and asked if there was a way we could do that in our fixed perspective adventure game."

Rolf Mohr

BILLY ALLISON AND ROLF MOHR INTERVIEW

Can you talk about how you arrived at the unique art style for *Curse of Enchantia*?
BA: I think the art style was pretty much down to Rolf Mohr; he designed and painted the backgrounds with real paint on boards, scanning them in and making them work within the limited colour palettes of computers of the period.

RM: I guess it was a happy coincidence where the art influences I had been into at the time lined up quite nicely with the theme and style of the game. I had been trying to emulate the masters of fantasy art, like Frazetta and Boris Vallejo, and European graphic novel artists I'd seen in *Heavy Metal* magazine. I also had a strong interest in film production design, admiring sci-fi illustrators like Chris Foss, H.R. Giger and so on. And I'd always loved the fantasy worlds of Disney, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Hobbit* and *Dark Crystal*, which I tried to infuse into the design of the world. I played the Sierra and LucasArts games and looked at how richly detailed some of their environments were, and tried to match that, but with a more painterly style.

"It was a lot of fun working with a bunch of young guys like these, just making it up as we went along."

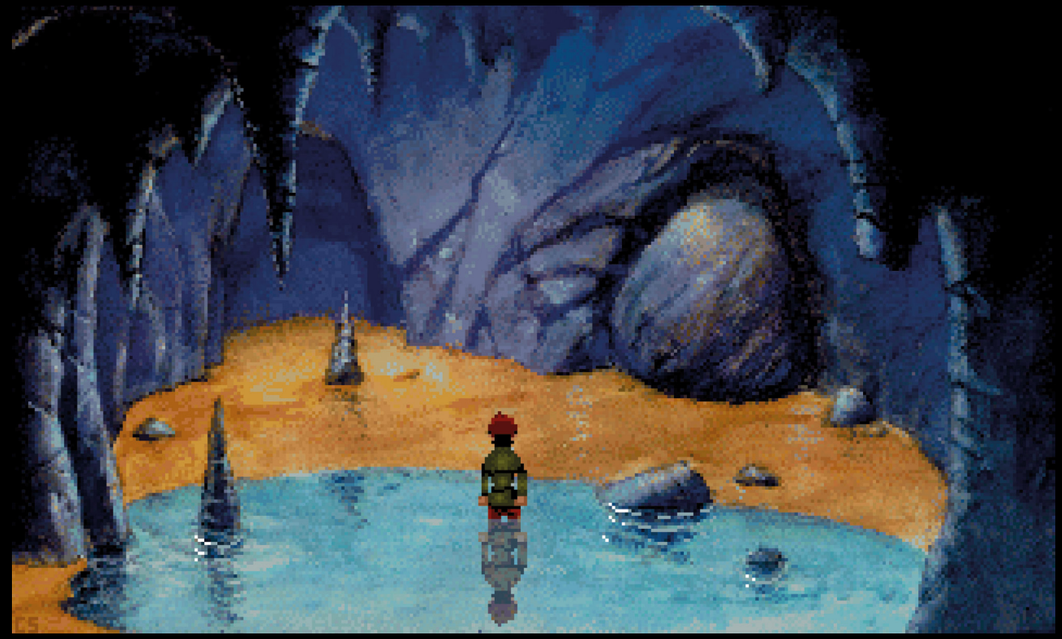
Rolf Mohr

What was your process for creating art and animations?
BA: It was a very simple process really, especially by today's standards. We would talk about the 'scene' or level, and about what needs to happen within that scene. Then I would simply go ahead and draw it out using Deluxe Paint. When I first started though, I used to draw the animation on paper – like normal traditional animation – and use a video camera to capture each drawing and then draw over them using Deluxe Paint; it got easier just to draw directly with a mouse. Once all the frames were done, they were laid out for the sprite puller tool – I may still have some of the sprites around somewhere.

RM: I prepared traditional gesso-primed boards and drew the layouts on detail or tracing paper, traced them down onto the board, and painted them with acrylics. I then scanned them in and retouched them in Deluxe Paint. The amount of retouching varied quite a bit depending how well the scanned paintings held up, and in some cases I created tiled sections that would loop and repeat, such as the castle corridor at the start of the game, and the cave maze sections.

What were the differences between developing for DOS and the Amiga?
BA: Only the amount of colours we could use as far as I was concerned; both versions were pretty much coded separately. I seem to remember they used the same editor for collision detection.

RM: The big difference was the very limited colours on the Amiga compared to the 'full' 256 colours on the PC. This meant some of the digitised images degraded badly in 16 colours requiring more touch-up in Deluxe Paint than the DOS version.



▲ Brad explores a cave in *Curse of Enchantia* on his quest to return home safely.

"We literally had no space left – a full walk cycle was out, so I did a one-legged hopping character with half the frames!"

Billy Allison

Do you have any anecdotal stories from the creation of *Curse of Enchantia*?
BA: Oh, there were lots of disagreements and such like! One time, someone changed the password on one of the tools because the person using it didn't trust people to leave it alone. It was changed so only the wrong password would let them into the program when they came into work the next morning! There was also that time when producer Jeremy Heath-Smith finally played the game at the 11th hour and suddenly bellowed, "Wait! You can't let the player die! You guys have to change it so the player just goes back to the start of the level!", thus changing the whole game!

RM: There was nothing too exciting, no monitors being chucked out of windows like the legendary Bitmap Brothers, but I do recall a fight broke out in the car park in front of the office. A programmer had one of the other lads – a musician, maybe – bent over backwards on a car bonnet while he pounded his face into it with his fist. Jeremy – our boss – shouted out to them from a window to come inside for a telling off. It was a bit like a school yard in those days.

Looking back, what parts of *Curse of Enchantia* are you most proud of?
BA: For me, it was the memory save I made on the one-legged guard. We literally had no space left – a full walk cycle was out, so I did a one-legged hopping character with half the frames! To be honest, I'm proud of the game in general, as it was the first game that I worked on.

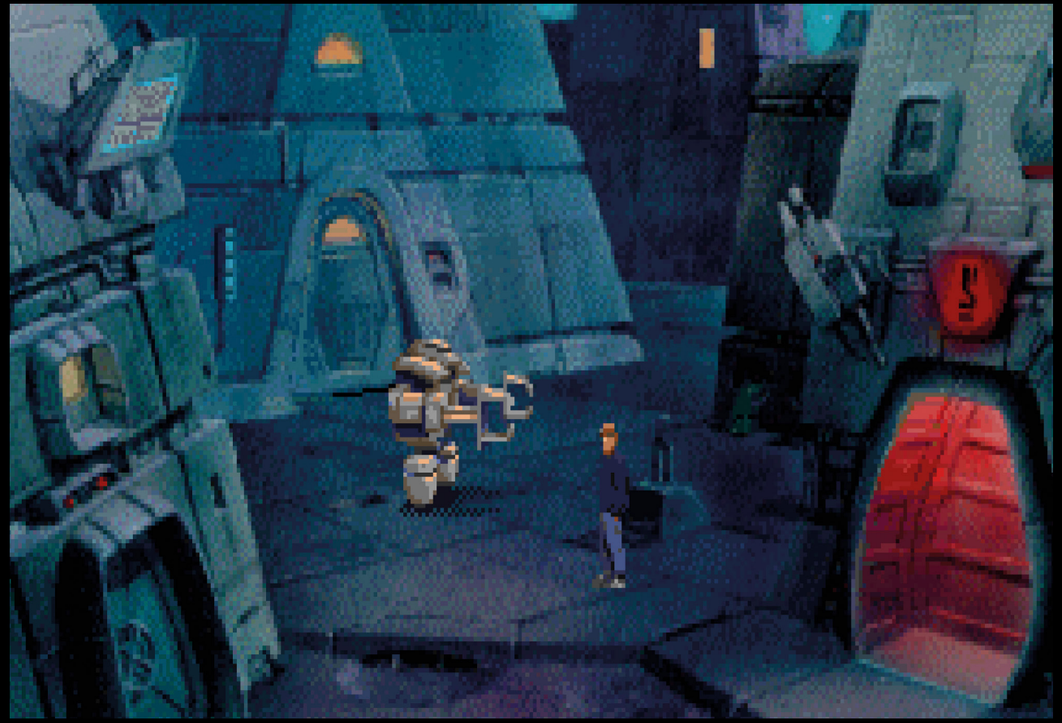
RM: I think my proudest moment was years later, watching a 'Let's Play' of the game on YouTube by minor celebrity Yahtzee Croshaw, who said *Enchantia* was the first Amiga game he ever owned and he always thought the backgrounds were the highlight of the game. But he found the scenes to be inexplicably random along with the puzzles, leading him to conclude the developers must have hired some artist in Sweden living in a log cabin to do a bunch of paintings which they then made up some story and puzzles to fit around!

Is it true that *Universe* was originally intended to be the sequel to *Curse of Enchantia*?
RM: Jeremy intended to follow up with another point-and-click adventure after the relative success of *Curse of Enchantia*, but I don't recall much talk of a sequel. There might have been some ideas written up, I'm not sure. I've always wanted to make a sequel ever since, expanding the world into a 3D realm which could be more fully explored. I doubt that will ever happen, since Core and its IPs have changed hands so many times with the various company acquisitions since.

Were you heavily involved in the game design of *Universe*?
RM: Yes, I'd written a film treatment that I'd previously sent off to a few Hollywood big shots like Gary Kurtz, James Cameron and John Carpenter, which they naturally declined. There was a ludicrous moment when I was standing in a phone booth on Derby Road in front of the block of flats where my girlfriend lived, shoving in pound coins frantically as I called ICM, the agency who repped James Cameron to ask if he'd received my package. The receptionist asked, "Is that Roger Moore?" on hearing my English voice. I did get a note in the returned package that Cameron was "impressed" by my Colossus pic which I'd included. Anyway, I pitched my idea as an adaptation, with a kid from our world being transported into a sci-fi fantasy world, and Jeremy liked it.
So I worked with programmer-turned-artist-turned-designer Gary 'Jim' Bottomley-Mason to write a modified version of the story and game design; he wrote most of the dialogue for the characters. I hand-painted all the backgrounds again, this time using an airbrush in some of them. I also incorporated a few illustrations I'd already done as samples, such as Colossus, Arcway and Snorglat, which we included as printed cards in the box. There were two backgrounds created digitally by Stu Atkinson in Real 3D: a bridge scene over a monorail and a looping scene with the Wheelworld rotating in the background for the shooting mini-game.

Can you talk about the innovative SPAC (Super Pre-Adjusted Colour) system that allowed 256-colour graphics?
RM: That was the creation of Gary Antcliffe, a very smart programmer who joined our team on *Universe*. It ran a process on the digitised full colour image to generate a split unique 16-colour palette for each line of pixels. Genius stuff, but it did make the retouching on the Amiga a bit more of a pain, being able to only pick colours from within each line.

Is it true that the lead character, Boris, is a rotoscoped version of you? What was the process for creating this animation style?
RM: I'd seen the game *Another World* on the Amiga and loved how fluid and animated the playable character was, and asked if there was a way we could do that in our fixed perspective adventure game. Gary said he could make it work, treating it as an animated sprite for eight different directions of movement, like an isometric game, and scaling him into the distance where needed. So we filmed me walking and running around and Stu Atkinson had the enviable task of tweaking every frame to make it loop seamlessly into the run and walk cycles.



▲ A scene from *Universe* where Boris Verne ends up in an alien city.

▲ Original hand-drawn and painted backgrounds for *Curse of Enchantia* and *Universe* by Rolf Mohr.

BILLY ALLISON AND ROLF MOHR INTERVIEW

1992

Dark Seed
Cyberdreams' debut was a deeply disturbing game, made using the paintings of famous horror designer H.R. Giger. Although he didn't create any original art for the game, Giger did personally pick which images should be included. For them to appear how he wanted, he demanded a 640×350 resolution, made possible by reducing the palette from 256 to 16 colours.

92

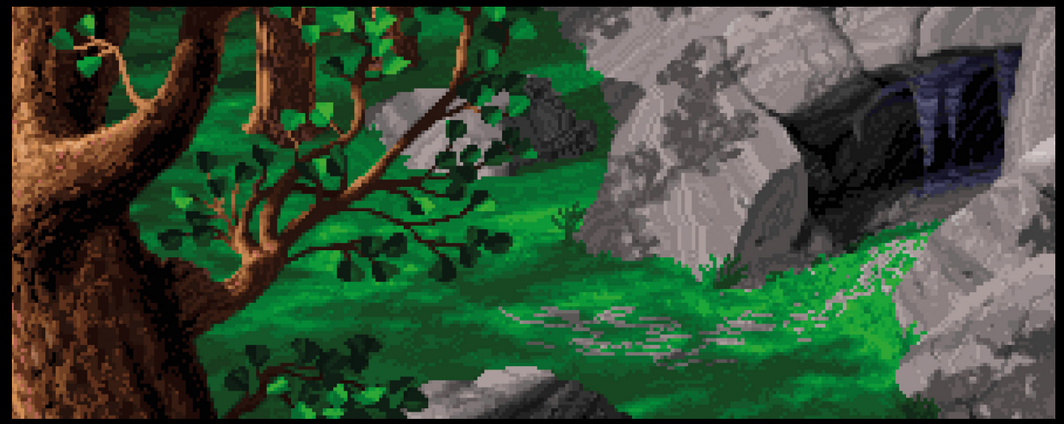
The Legend of Kyrandia: Book One - Fables & Fiends

Originally titled just 'Fables & Fiends', *The Legend of Kyrandia* marks the start of Westwood's point-and-click trilogy of games. The control system was unique since it used a single-icon cursor, combined with a flexible inventory system, something that was later implemented by other point-and-click adventure games. *The Legend of Kyrandia* contains over 100 fantasy scenes by renowned artist Rick Parks.

1992

93

1992



▲ A selection of VGA backgrounds by Rick Parks, set in the fantasy land of Kyrandia.

94

Louis Castle

As one of the co-founders of the influential Westwood Studios, Louis Castle has had a hand in some of the most important video games of the past few decades, including the million-selling *Command & Conquer* franchise. Westwood sadly no longer exists, as it was swallowed up by Electronic Arts in 1998 and closed five years later, and it's easy to overlook how much of an important contribution the studio made to the point-and-click genre.

When did you know that you wanted a career in video games?
In 1983 I decided to pursue games as a potential career when I was faced with the decision of which university I wanted to attend. As long as I can remember I wanted to find a career where I could apply my artistic skills. Throughout high school – between 1981 and 1983 – I planned to be an architect or at least a draughtsman. I went to a trade show in 1981 and saw computer-aided design which inspired me to buy an Apple computer. I learned to program since there weren't many good drawing tools for personal computers at the time. That led to doing art for local game companies and programming my own simple games. When my early application for a full architectural scholarship to Arizona State University was approved, I was conflicted because I wanted to study Computer Science. I asked my father if I should take the free architecture education or work to pay my way through degrees at our local University, UNLV, in Fine Arts and Computer Science, so I could make games. After a few questions he said that I knew what I wanted to do, but I was asking permission. So, I decided to take the far riskier path and set out to be a video game maker.

When you founded Westwood Studios, were point-and-click adventure games something you wanted to develop?
Of course! I loved the early adventure games and aspired to do better stories and graphics with more animation. My friends and I even tried to get some publishers to fund a graphic adventure called *The Grail*. When I met Westwood co-founder Brett Sperry, his contacts were with publishers that specialised in adventure, sports and RPGs, so it was a few years before we got a chance to independently fund our own adventure game; *The Legend of Kyrandia* was initially based on a story we licensed.

How did the idea for creating *The Legend of Kyrandia* come about?
Brett was a big fan of the multi-user dungeon game by the same name. We also had the great fortune to have the phenomenal artist Rick Parks working for us. The idea of creating a beautiful adventure game that would build upon our design of a context-sensitive cursor seemed like a great original game to build.

Where did the inspiration come from?
The original story we licensed set up the basic characters and a few of the game's puzzles, like the Fire Berry maze. The vast majority of the writing and the sense of whimsy was mostly from Rick Gush, our writer, and the lovely art from Rick Parks, our lead artist. Brett was the chief designer and executive producer, so he was the principle editor for the game series. I was the head of the art department and had some direct involvement in the core technologies we used to compress the graphics for storage, fast loading, depth buffering and some graphics tricks for lighting.

"Rick [Parks] was always smiling, laughing and positive. His laugh was truly infectious. When someone was bickering during the workday (we worked a lot of long hours), Rick had an amazing ability to come over and defuse the conversation, and make everyone feel great. He just had that effect on people."

Mike Legg – lead programmer
The Legend of Kyrandia

Rick Parks sadly passed away in the '90s, leaving a massive legacy of amazing artwork behind him. How did Rick come to work for Westwood and what was his impact at the studio?
Westwood had become pretty well known as an Amiga and Atari ST games studio and Rick was also well known in the Amiga community. I believe we met in person at a CES show and he indicated he would love to work for us. After a brief conversation it was clear there was no way we could afford him.

▲ Animated introductory scenes from *The Legend of Kyrandia* showing the beautiful fantasy land.

▲ Zanthia stands in the petrified forest in *The Legend of Kyrandia: Book Two – Hand of Fate.*

He came back to us and asked if he could continue to do his painting work while having a full-time role at Westwood, and we were excited to have him. His impact was immediate and wide-reaching. Rick's ability to deliver at high quality with nearly any constraint really pushed the bar up at Westwood, making every artist better.

Do you have any stories or anecdotes about Rick you could share with us?
Rick was such a fun-loving guy, many stories leap to mind. On one of our outings he put on a badge that said, "If lost return me to Westwood". He was frequently a participant in antics coordinated by Mike Legg, from putting fish in the local fountain to throwing a fake snake into a room after we had all just seen a very similar real one in the parking lot.

The *Legend of Kyrandia* used a simplified action interface as opposed to the standard list of verbs. Was this a deliberate direction you wanted to take?
Oh yes. We had learned a great deal from our previous games about context-sensitive design and were convinced it would make for a much more accessible interface. A good deal of the underlying technology was to determine the player's intent by the pixel they clicked on, so that the player was immersed into the experience.

Were you involved in the creation of the in-game art?
Only as the studio art director and visual technologist. Rick was such a great artist that he set the pace for our team. I encouraged others and helped with feedback.

"When we first hired him at Westwood, he was working as a freelance painter, and we could not afford to pay him what he was worth. But he was working by himself most days and missed being around others. He found that he really loved the Westwood crew, and was more than happy to come and work in a new field (computer game art), and be around other creative and fun-loving people."

Mike Legg – lead programmer
The Legend of Kyrandia

The *Legend of Kyrandia* would spawn two sequels on PC. Did you always see it as a series of three games?
No. *The Legend of Kyrandia* was originally intended as a single story but, as we developed the game, the world expanded and we were all excited about making a game that departed from the original framework.

Which is your favourite game in the series?
I personally loved *The Legend of Kyrandia: Book 3 – Malcolm's Revenge*. The idea that the main bad guy, Malcolm, had been misunderstood all this time caught my fancy. *The Legend of Kyrandia: Hand of Fate* certainly had its moments but I just enjoyed the *Malcolm* storyline the most.

***Lands of Lore* was a first-person dungeon-crawler that featured some point-and-click elements. Did your work on *Kyrandia* influence this design choice?**
Definitely, but it was more from our work on *Eye of the Beholder* which led to *The Legend of Kyrandia*. It's hard to imagine now, but context-sensitive clicks were an innovation at that time. We really liked the idea of having the game understand the context of a player's input.

▲ Malcolm visits Darm, the wizard in *The Legend of Kyrandia: Book 3 – Malcolm's Revenge.*

Westwood's next venture in the genre was the ambitious *Blade Runner*. Can you tell us how you managed to secure the license for this iconic media property?
Westwood had been acquired by Virgin Interactive Entertainment in 1992. Virgin's President, Martin Alper, called and told us that *Blade Runner* was being shopped and asked if we were interested. I jumped at the opportunity. *Blade Runner* was truly my favourite movie and I was thrilled to have the chance to pitch a design. I later found out we were very late to the process and were considered a long shot. Our approach was to recreate the opening shots of the film to show the licensor what we could do with modern 3D rendering and motion capture. Our approach to echo the film's emotional expression with a story simulator was very novel for its time. Most adventure games were – and still are – very linear.

Did Ridley Scott have any input in the development of the game?
Unfortunately not. I would have loved to work with Ridley Scott but he and the licensors had a chequered history, to say the least.

Did you have any creative input or guidelines on how the game should look and feel?
We did! We went out of our way to find people who worked on the film. From the high profile names like Syd Mead to the behind-the-camera talent, our access to the people who made the film helped us achieve what I feel was a very authentic presentation of the *Blade Runner* world.

Why did you choose to base the game on a new story as opposed to the plot of the film?
I was very determined to recreate the feeling of the film. The tension created by not being sure where the detective story would lead or when violence would occur would have been impossible if we just followed the film script. I also didn't want to preordain the question of which characters were human and which were Replicants. I felt strongly that the core theme of what it means to be human would be far better explored in a story where many elements were not predetermined. Setting our story concurrent with the film, with heavy use of the Replicant archetypes, is intended to allow the player to follow the film without replaying the exact story.

Was any attempt made to get Harrison Ford involved in the game?
We did want him, but he was very vocal at the time that he felt computer-rendered characters were a threat to the acting business and he had no love lost for the film. In fact, we employed three or more actors per character (model, mocap and voice-over). We paid SAG rates and managed to get most of the film's actors and actresses to happily participate. I was thrilled to recently see Harrison Ford in *Blade Runner 2049* and I hope he has changed his position on interactive entertainment.

Why was the decision taken to create the game using CGI and innovative voxel-based 3D visuals as opposed to the more traditional 2D art?
We were really just focused on trying to get to the highest possible visual quality that felt like the film. Having animated scenes gave us a cinematic feel but also demanded a new solution to characters. We looked into 3D polygonal characters but at that time the 3D tech didn't allow for characters that would fit in the world. The voxel tech worked well when fully optimised but we didn't have time to do that work for all of the characters. In the end, I was happy with the result for the main characters, but disappointed with the secondary characters which ended up very blocky.

How did you create the graphics?
Everything was created in 3D Studio Max and then rendered on our rendering farm. The scenes were created to loop as a baseline. The rendered loops included depth and normal vectors so that we could composite real-time elements like characters into the loops and even light the environments. This also allowed us to do some amazing camera pans into the 3D sets.

LOUIS CASTLE INTERVIEW

Did the use of voxels seriously push the technical limits of the time?
With full-screen animated scenes and camera pans we were way ahead of any other games in many ways. I would have loved to continue to develop the tech and improve it but we didn't end up making another adventure game. I also felt the story simulator would have been a wonderful series to build upon. To this day, I have not seen many truly simulated stories and I still feel they could be very successful.

What parts are you most proud of?
Our team's ability to capture the feeling of the *Blade Runner* universe really made me proud. When a player plays the game and feels the way they played was the perfect solution is also a favourite moment for me. It's so exciting to think that there are no perfectly correct solutions, since every player has consequences of choice rather than a simple branching storyline.

The game came on multiple CDs and was quite a lavish production – was it commercially successful after all of the costs were taken into account?
It was indeed. Ultimately we sold over a million copies which was double or more than the best competitive products of that time. Our margins were thinner, but we still did quite well. Westwood was very efficient when it came to development spend. Some of today's games spend more for their trailers than the $2.5 million we spent to make the whole game.

Would you like to revisit *Blade Runner* and do a modern remake some day?
I would. I was very excited by the new film but didn't get a chance to get involved. There's still hope though. I plan to make games for a long time!

What do you think makes the point-and-click genre so special and beloved?
I think that it's because it's just so simple to interact with the game. It's just natural to point-and-click with a mouse. Even as children we are trained to point at things to give context.

Westwood was sold to Electronic Arts (EA) in the late '90s and was shuttered a few years later. What emotions did this stir up for you?
Westwood was sold by Viacom to EA in August of 1998 and we consolidated the Vegas and former Westwood Irvine staff into the former Dreamworks studio to form EA LA in March of 2003. We had some great product releases under EA, but ultimately the decision to consolidate EA's West Coast studios to form a destination studio in LA resulted in the end of the Westwood brand and Vegas and Irvine studios. I was the General Manager of Westwood at the time as Brett had left a couple years earlier. It was a very disappointing time and the speed at which we had to close things down made it feel very abrupt and less dignified than one would hope. I made great efforts to consolidate into Vegas, so the ultimate decision to go to LA was very disappointing. I stayed with EA for six more years and enjoyed my time there, but I still miss the special mix of quirky personalities that made Westwood so special.

▲ Various in-game CGI scenes from *Blade Runner* which capture the visual look of the film perfectly.

1992

Loom
This 1992 DOS CD-ROM release of *Loom* featured a VGA graphical overhaul and the introduction of a full voice soundtrack – the first LucasArts adventure game to do so. However, many fans prefer the original EGA version, due to the charm of the 16-colour graphics and the removal of the voice acting, which, due to memory constraints, meant that parts of the story were removed.

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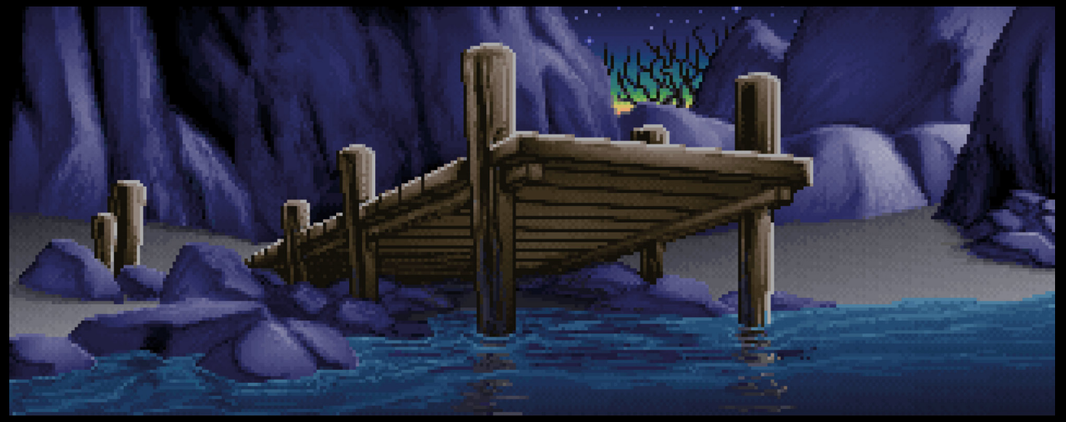
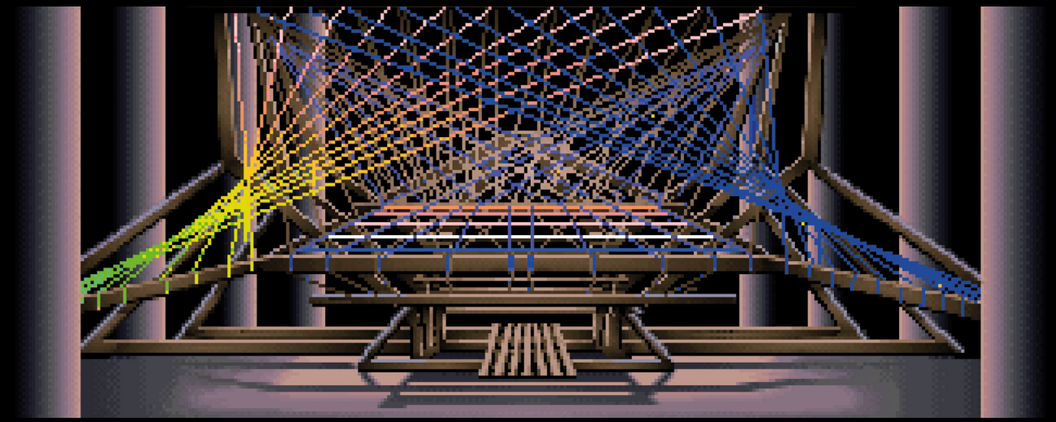
1992





▲ A selection of environments taken from the VGA version of *Loom*, displaying great use of light and reflections.

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James Dollar

James Dollar began his career at Lucasfilm Games at the close of the '80s, contributing artwork to *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* and *Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis*. Over the next decade he worked on some of the company's most notable point-and-click titles, producing gorgeous background artwork which set the tone and atmosphere for the player's epic quest.

When did you know that you wanted a career in video game art?
I became interested in computer art right after college. I had studied art at UC Berkeley and wanted to be a painter at the time. I spent the year after graduating preparing a portfolio and applying to graduate schools.

Were you artistic as a child?
I remember being in third grade and having a teacher who really encouraged me artistically, but only later when I was in seventh grade did I have a real art teacher who really brought it out in me. I then realised I could draw naturally, and had one of my paintings shown in an exhibition at the county museum.

How did you come to work at Lucasfilm?
I had a good friend named James Wood from college who got a job at the Skywalker Ranch doing IT support in the games division. He invited me out there for lunch one day and introduced me to the art department. Gary Winnick was the art director and I remember asking him how one would get a job there and he said, "You have to draw like a 'mofo' to get a job here." I then pestered my friend James to get me an interview and they humoured him because he's a nice guy; they let me come out and show them my portfolio. Gary was very surprised by my work and said I could come back for an art test. It involved redrawing a screen from the *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* game as a 256-colour version. I wasn't very familiar with Deluxe Paint and didn't do a great job at first, but they let me come out for another test the next week and gave me a little more instruction. I did a much better job on that test and they hired me that day.

What was the working environment at Lucasfilm like?
We worked at the Skywalker Ranch in the Stable House, which was behind the main house. It was both intense and very relaxed. It was like working in someone's nice house with all the offices surrounding comfortable 'living rooms' all decorated with priceless paintings and movie memorabilia. We would go to catered lunches in the main house and stand in line with celebrities for the meals. People had fun working there and were very dedicated; they'd often work late into the night.

"It was both intense and very relaxed. It was like working in someone's nice house with all the offices surrounding comfortable 'living rooms' all decorated with priceless paintings and movie memorabilia!"

Can you talk about how you created your pixel art? Was it drawn by hand first or straight onto the computer?
We would mostly draw directly on the computer using a mouse and the program Deluxe Paint. It was like drawing with a bar of soap! On later games we would do drawings and paintings on paper and scan them, but still most of the art was done directly on the computer. There was often some preliminary concept art that would get done to work out ideas, and that was mostly done on paper. It was only a little later that they started doing 3D models and rendering for games; it was mostly only done for the movies over at ILM at that time.

When creating graphics, did you take instruction from the game's director on a general look that was required, or were you given complete freedom?
On *Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis* we would get direction from Hal Barwood mostly, and some also from Noah Falstein. In some areas we had more freedom with the look.

You were heavily involved in creating art for both *Indiana Jones* adventure games. How was this experience?
It was great; we had access to a lot of interesting research that was done for the movies. I also got to meet Steven Spielberg and he liked my artwork. On *Fate of Atlantis*, I remember there were a lot of revisions of the story and reworking of the artwork as things would change all the time. Hal Barwood was always coming up with new ideas and changing his mind; he was a very exuberant and creative guy, a lot of fun to work with but also frustrating as it would mean the beautiful scene you just finished would get thrown out or reworked because it no longer fit the story. We started out working at the Skywalker Ranch in these really cool offices and then one day Steve Arnold – who was the director of the Games Division and a really great guy – called us into his office (there were less than 20 of us who worked there at the time, so all of us could literally fit into his office) and told us they were moving us off the Ranch and down to an industrial area in San Rafael. There was a lot of wailing and sadness as we really loved our 'country club' life up there. We were moved into a building next door to ILM; it was in fact the old Pixar building that had been vacated a couple of years after George sold Pixar to Steve Jobs. The team on *Fate of Atlantis* was rather small by today's standards; about 15 or so people worked on it with about eight to ten of those being on the core team.

When creating your backgrounds, what reference materials did you work from?
We would use some photos and some artwork. We had access to a great library of images from the Lucasfilm library. We also relied on imagination a great deal.

Which elements from the *Indiana Jones* games are you most proud of?
I worked on about a third of all the backgrounds on *Fate of Atlantis*, including most of the desert scenes, and was very happy with how they turned out. For the *Last Crusade* 256-colour upgrade I did close to half of the backgrounds. I worked with Avril Harrison and Bill Eaken on *Crusade*, and we did 90 per cent of the backgrounds between us. Avril had a great sense of humour; she had a thick Scottish accent and was a joy to work with. Steve Purcell had a great sense of humour too and always had clever or funny things to say which kept us all laughing. I painted the Azores scene all by myself and also the underwater submarine scenes. Bill Eaken set the style for all the *Atlantis* scenes and did most of them. I remember painting a few of the *Atlantis* scenes myself following his style. Bill and I also created all the colour cycling animations; Bill was very creative with the colour cycling. I remember working on the waterfall in the caves using this technique.

How was working on the Amiga conversion of *The Secret of Monkey Island*? Was it a nice machine to create art for, and did it offer any challenges compared to the PC?
The artwork was just ported over from the PC and so there wasn't any difference on the art side. The programmers had a more Amiga-specific experience with the code.

Did you get to work on any more point-and-click adventure games at LucasArts?
I worked on the 256-colour versions of *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, *Loom*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *The Secret of Monkey Island I* and *II*, *The Dig*, and, of course, *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*.

"We would mostly draw directly on the computer using a mouse and the program Deluxe Paint. It was like drawing with a bar of soap!"

▲ A selection of James' background art from *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*.

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Hook

Developed by Shadow Software, this adventure was released in 1992 to tie in with the Steven Spielberg film. To make the game family-friendly, the traditional point-and-click interface has been distilled; just five verb icons and an inventory sit at the bottom of the screen. The large character portraits change expression depending on progress throughout the short, hour-long game.

1992

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1992

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

Originally this sequel to *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure* was going to be based on a rejected movie script written by Chris Columbus. However, writers Hal Barwood and Noah Falstein instead wrote a story unique to the game, following Jones' search for the Lost City of Atlantis. The detailed VGA graphics, captivating story and excellent voice acting made this an instant classic.

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▲ A series of backgrounds taken from various locations in *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, including the old dig site in Iceland where inside Indy and Sophia meet archaeologist Dr. Bjorn Heimdall.

Hal Barwood

Hal Barwood is a man of many talents: he's a screenwriter, producer, director and novelist who presides over a body of work that stretches all the way back to the 1970s. For gamers, his association with LucasArts is what makes him most famous; he worked on titles such as *Star Wars: Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire*, *Big Sky Trooper* and *RTX: Red Rock*, but *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* remains his magnum opus; Barwood directed, designed and wrote this seminal point-and-click adventure.

You worked in movies before moving into games. How did you come to make that transition?
I've been passionate about game design since I was a nerdy kid growing up in the '50s. My biggest influence was paper-rock-scissors, which I thought (and still think) was profound. I built several games in high school and in college that used a paper-rock-scissors-like mechanic: football play-selection, baseball, aircraft dogfighting, and so on. My friends got to play them, and sometimes did so even without my enthusiastic pressure. I couldn't imagine how to make a career out of what we now call 'paper games', however, and I had another interest – movies. So I became a screenwriter, a producer and, very briefly, a director.

It wasn't obvious in the early '60s, but the digital revolution was stirring, and I got an early glimpse. My wife and I grew up in Hanover, New Hampshire. One summer, home from USC film school on vacation, I learned the BASIC programming language at Dartmouth College (where it was invented). The idea that ordinary people could operate computers hit me hard. The very first thing I did was teach that creaky old GE time-sharing mainframe to play paper-rock-scissors. The fuse was lit, but it was a long time burning...

Years later, on an evening in suburban London, I was part of a big and boisterous film crew shooting an Iron Age village we had constructed for the movie *Dragonslayer*, which Matthew Robbins and I wrote together. As the producer, it was my job to take care that all the goods and services were delivered to the set so Matthew, the director, could turn everything into important scenes. There were Iron Age extras aplenty in carefully crafted burlap. Thatched huts were fuelled for torching by our rascally dragon. Arc lights were mounted on huge towers to provide moonlight. An Iron Age dance was being rehearsed. A young man was about to be revealed as a woman.

However, when everything was ready, I left the set for the seclusion of my trailer, where I taught an HP-41C programmable calculator to play a *Dragonslayer* version of *Hunt the Wumpus*. I realised that, if what should have been one of the most thrilling nights of my life held less charm than a calculator, I was in the wrong business. That was in 1980. It took me 10 years and many detours to become a professional game designer. By then I was already 50 years old.

Do you think this gives you a unique perspective on game design that other developers perhaps lack?
I suppose that my detour through screenwriting and movie production helped smooth my late start in game development. I knew how to tell a story, and it wasn't my first job – I also knew how to work hard.

How did you get your job at LucasArts?
George Lucas started the game division at Lucasfilm in the mid-'80s. He knew of my interests, and I was able to hang around his new venture. Gradually the game group matured, and George let them do an adventure game version of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Like the movie, it was a big success. The company wanted a follow-up, but the developers, Noah Falstein, David Fox and Ron Gilbert, were all exhausted by the experience. They were looking for someone to come aboard and relieve them for other duties. They were aware that I had been building computer games on my own, and I got to be the project leader they were looking for.

What was the working environment at LucasArts like?
Life at LucasArts started out like my idea of heaven and slowly, slowly, turned into hell. In the movie business, everyone on a film crew is a solid pro. In game development, a relatively new field, not so much. Moreover, there are no unions – no work rules at all, really – and long, longer, and extremely long hours are required to get anything done. What we call 'crunch' – it deadens the soul. Even worse, good managers were hard to come by. During my 13 years at the company I worked for ten different bosses of various drives, qualifications and competence, none of them especially focused on building great games.

What was it like working on *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*?
When I was hired, the idea was that Noah Falstein and I would turn a rejected *Jones* script into a game. I read the script – there's a reason it was rejected – and Noah and I, both of us sensing disaster, determined to look elsewhere. George had a reference library at his ranch, and Noah and I started leafing through coffee table books recounting ancient mysteries, an essential ingredient of any *Jones* adventure. We turned a page in one of those books and found ourselves staring at a diagram of Atlantis: three concentric circles as described by none other than Plato. That diagram sure looked like a video game. A little reading gave us a MacGuffin: the imaginary metal orichalcum, said to come from the lost city, which we decided was going to be a substance of immense power. Stir in the Nazis, and we have a game.

Noah, with feedback from the previous *Jones* game, knew that players varied in their interests, and he proposed the three paths, each one emphasising a different mode of play: puzzles, cooperation and action. I spent some time refining the narrative and invented a shifty woman companion for Indy: Sophia Hapgood, a self-described psychic who was under the spell of an ancient Atlantean god. Noah then went off on another project, the ill-fated *The Dig*, and I spent two years cooking up puzzles, cramming action sequences into the SCUMM engine, and getting those damn paths to work right.

Was it hard to come up with a completely new Indy story that wasn't based on a film?
Well, writing is work, and it's never a 'look-ma-no-hands' job for me. But that's what I do. And anything would have been better than the rejected script I was handed.

Did Steven Spielberg have any input into the direction of the game?
Steven was not involved.

What was your role in development?
I was the principal designer and project leader, turning narrative into specific locations, inventing puzzles, action sequences, and writing an immense amount of dialogue. I'm a minor league programmer, so I did a lot of the SCUMM programming, and I'm also a graphic designer, so I made most of the little icons the player collects.

The graphics are very rich and detailed. Did you work closely with the artists to visualise the scenes?
Thanks for the kind evaluation. Yes, of course, we were a small team and it was a good collaboration. I'm amazed at what the artists could accomplish with the tools we had. Ours was the first LucasArts game to use – ta-da! – a 256-colour palette. Think of it! Two hundred and fifty-six colours at our disposal! I was hoping the company would buy a scanner, but unfortunately, scanners were a new development and cost around $5,000 in those days. The very next game shifted to scanned art, a great relief to everyone and a source of regret to me.

Which parts are you most proud of?
I'm kind of proud of the whole thing. I particularly like the slightly perverse ways I subverted the LucasArts adventure game paradigm. Most of our games distinguished themselves by being outrageously funny. By contrast, *Fate of Atlantis* is melodramatically serious and immersive. Most of our games were explicitly chartered to prevent the player from getting killed, but an authentic *Jones* story must put Indy in mortal danger, and I insisted.

Was there any talk of your story being made into a film?
Not within the company. Outsiders have mentioned the idea, but it must be understood that George and Steven would never make a *Jones* movie from previously published material.

Did you work on any other point-and-click adventure games while at LucasArts?
Even while finishing up *Fate* I began to feel that adventure games were becoming passé, and I turned my attention to console RPGs and action-adventure games. But, a few years later, I got excited again and developed the makings of a *Star Wars* adventure with C-3PO as the bewildered hero. Unhappily for me, another adventure game project already underway was sliding way over budget and schedule. Management thought the end was near and decided not to build my own concept.

▲ A scene from *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, with Indy and Sophia in the Heart of Atlantis that employs a beautiful orange, red and purple colour palette.

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1992

King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow
This sixth game in the *King's Quest* series runs on a revised SCI1.1 engine that supported animated movie sequences for the first time. The CD-ROM version featured a landmark 3D graphic introductory movie (created by Kronos Digital Entertainment), using the vocal talents of Hollywood actors. This was Sierra's first adventure game to feature its lip-syncing technology.

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▲ *King's Quest VI* is often cited as the fans' favourite and a highlight of the series due to the spectacular graphics, music, and an enthralling storyline.

1992

The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes: The Case of the Serrated Scalpel

This two-game series follows literature's most famous detective as he explores a historically accurate depiction of Victorian-era London. Holmes' keen deductive abilities means practically every item on screen is described in detail when clicked on. Puzzles are solved by determining which clues tie together, and which are red herrings. The 3DO version boasted full voice acting and FMV actors instead of static portraits.

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1992

Alone in the Dark

Inspired by the works of H.P. Lovecraft, Frédérick Raynal's action adventure was not only the first survival horror game, but also the first game to use 3D polygonal characters against fixed 2D backgrounds. Obscured and claustrophobic camera angles mean you never truly know what horror lurks around the next corner. The pioneering gameplay features a blend of exploration, combat, puzzle-solving and inventory management. *Alone in the Dark* is rightfully considered one of the most influential titles of all time.

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1992

Lure of the Temptress

For its debut release, Revolution Software wanted to create a world that felt truly alive. The innovative Virtual Theatre engine enabled non-player characters to walk around performing everyday actions, even if the player didn't prompt them – something fairly unique at the time. To add further realism, a technique called auto-routing makes protagonist Diermot avoid obstacles automatically.

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Charles Cecil

Charles Cecil is one of the undisputed elder statesman of the UK video games industry, having occupied roles at U.S. Gold, Artic Computing and Activision, as well as establishing his own studios – Paragon Programming and Revolution Software – the latter of which was founded in 1990 and continues to operate to this day. Revolution's debut title was the point-and-click adventure *Lure of the Temptress*, and the studio would later release other excellent examples of the genre in the shape of *Beneath a Steel Sky* and *Broken Sword*.

How did you first become aware of computer adventure games, and interested in creating them?
Well, when I left school in 1980 I thought that I was going to be a mechanical engineer. I applied and got a place on a very good course, and I applied to Ford for a management trainee sponsorship, and got it. At Ford I met Richard Turner, who'd just started a computer games company called Artic Computing, based in Hull. Given that the car industry at that time in the UK was in the real doldrums, what he was doing was exciting, fresh and new. He invited me to write an adventure game. We played a Scott Adams game actually, on his TRS-80. I said, "Oh, I think I could probably write games", and started doing so, and the games were very successful. Richard had already written one called *Adventure A: Planet of Death*. I wrote another one, imaginatively titled *Adventure B: Inca Curse*, followed by *Adventure C: Ship of Doom*, and *Adventure D: Espionage Island*. *Adventure B* was very much inspired by *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which had just come out, and was, and in my view still is, the best *Indiana Jones* adventure film. But it was interesting, because it starts in a jungle clearing, and that's it… I met a producer a few years later who had played it, and he described that scene, and he described it in great detail. He described the light coming through the leaves. He described the sounds. He described everything. None of which I'd actually written. And it was fascinating that the adventure genre could be so powerful [in terms of] placing imagery in people's minds…

Can you give us some background on the formation of Revolution Software – was the aim from the start to specialise in adventure game titles?
I stayed at Artic for a few years, but it couldn't compete with what was going on around me at the time, so I set up a small development company writing games for U.S. Gold. I'd known Rod Cousens very well, and he approached me and asked me to work for Activision. But it got frustrating because, as head of development, I was focusing on the games that were going wrong, rather than contributing to the games that were going right. In 1989, the company that was then Activision collapsed, and I was made redundant. I decided that I'd really like to go back into development again, so I founded Revolution. I'd worked with a programmer called Tony Warriner at Artic, and he was keen to join. My girlfriend at the time, Noirin Carmody, joined us. And Tony brought a friend, a programmer called David Sykes. We started on an absolute shoestring, in a tiny rented room above a fruit shop in Hull.

Obviously I had experience with writing text adventures, and Noirin had been instrumental in setting up Sierra in Europe. And there were some really interesting adventures coming through like Level 9's [text and graphic games]. Certainly, what I was interested in doing was taking the tech – the point-and-click adventure – to a new level, and in particular to make the world feel more dynamic. So, on that basis, I designed the rudiments of a game that was to become *Beneath a Steel Sky*. And looking back at *Beneath a Steel Sky*, you can kind of see where it came from, because it's very much driven by an interface that pays tribute to and is based on a text adventure. It was a system that we called Virtual Theatre.

"I'd worked with a programmer called Tony Warriner at Artic, and he was keen to join. My girlfriend at the time, Noirin Carmody, joined us. And Tony brought a friend, a programmer called David Sykes. We started on an absolute shoestring, in a tiny rented room above a fruit shop in Hull."

"I think both LucasArts and Revolution, which started around about the same time, decided that you could probably convey a more interesting and entertaining experience by delivering humour."

The Virtual Theatre system made its debut in Revolution's first game, *Lure of the Temptress*. What were the inspirations behind that title?
Well, obviously, the Skorl as we call them are orcs… it's very much inspired by the whole *Dungeons & Dragons* kind of world. But, what we wanted to do was to subvert it, and subvert the way that games were taking themselves much too seriously. I think I probably need to thank Sierra for that, in particular *King's Quest*, which was so ludicrously serious. It was 'King Graham of Daventry'… really the American's view of this medieval British society. I think both LucasArts and Revolution, which started around about the same time, decided that you could probably convey a more interesting and entertaining experience by delivering humour.

Virtual Theatre allowed non-player characters to walk around the game world independently, doing their daily chores, which felt pretty cutting-edge for its time. How did you come to implement this feature, and how important did you feel the idea was in terms of making a believable and immersive environment?
One thing you need to bear in mind was that we were writing for the Atari ST [home computer]. From a technology perspective, the processor and the memory basically meant that it was very difficult to create a true system, so a lot of it was smoke and mirrors. One of the problems from a gameplay perspective was that if you needed to find a character and it wasn't clear where they were, you might have to wait for quite some time, which was frustrating. But it did, I think, give an indication of what could be achieved.

Visually, *Lure of the Temptress* was quite striking, impressing from the opening scene onward, with an introduction featuring a stylish silhouetted battle. How did you find working on the visual side of the game?
When we started, we had a background artist, but frankly he wasn't up to the job. And then we got a submission from Adam Tween, and Adam was responsible for drawing all those backgrounds, and he just had an amazing knack, because working with just 16 colours you had to share them between the background and the sprites, so it was an incredibly skilful thing to do. Although that sounds like a crippling constraint, actually what it did was define the look. The look was very simplistic in the way it used colours. Adam worked in conjunction with a guy called Steve Oades, who turned out to be the most brilliant animator. And slowly we built up a team.

To begin with, it was Tony and David [Sykes], Dave Cummins, Adam and Steve, and that was really the core team that built *Lure of the Temptress*. It was all based on the absolute serendipity of finding really brilliant people.

▲ Animated introduction to *Lure of the Temptress*. The king's men are defeated in battle and Diermot is imprisoned by the Skorl.

Another important feature of the game was the inclusion of a companion character, Ratpouch, who aided the player and helped solve puzzles, something that feels quite contemporary compared to modern titles such as *Uncharted*...
When we were writing Ratpouch, we were very much thinking about the *Blackadder* [Baldrick] character... In fact, all our games have had accompanying characters, be it Joey in *Beneath a Steel Sky*, or Nico in *Broken Sword*. And that's for a simple reason - it allows you to convey exposition in a much more fluid way. A lot of games where you don't have an accompanying character are done in a very clunky way with internal monologues, which blatantly convey the exposition as it changes, rather than doing it through dialogue which is a lot more satisfying.

I remember when the game was nearing completion there was a trade show, and Mirrorsoft asked me to do a presentation to a full room, including Bob Jacobs from Cinemaware. I gave the talk and showed how you could send Ratpouch around and there was silence. And I thought, "This hasn't gone well." Then somebody started clapping and then everybody stood up, and they just kept clapping as I looked on in utter disbelief. We'd arrived...

"We were very much trying to reflect our times in some of the jokes. The judge in there is called Judge Chutney, who of course takes inspiration from Judge Pickles. And a lot was very much based on the society as it was then, the fact that Margaret Thatcher had come in and was creating a very divisive society, in terms of North/South social cohesion."

How did the collaboration with *Watchmen* and *2000 A.D.* artist Dave Gibbons come about for your second adventure release, *Beneath a Steel Sky*?
While I'd been at Activision, Rod Cousens, who was my boss, asked me to get hold of Dave to find out whether the rights to *Watchmen* existed. And I did so and Dave told me very politely that they belonged to Dark Horse. But we met up and we kind of got on and became friends. So, I got back in touch with him and asked him if he would like to work with us on a video game, and he was very receptive to that. We'd already started on the story and Dave used to come up about once a month on the train to Hull. And what Dave did is he brought a new angle, both an artistic angle, but also he was involved with the story, and just the feeling... He really threw himself in... And that was a hugely positive influence on the game and many of the ideas.

What were the influences for that game?
Beneath a Steel Sky was very much inspired by some amazing films that had come out – *Blade Runner*, *Alien*... it was a real golden era for those science-fiction films. I was looking at the game recently and some of the other influences came back... For example, when I was sponsored by Ford they had very generously sent me to Bordeaux for a summer to work in a factory making automatic gearboxes. They had these amazing lathes and presses that went on all day, so that first section in the pipe factory is very much based on my memory of that Ford factory in Bordeaux. Around that time there was a scandal about pipes that were being sent to Saddam Hussein, so I changed the layout from a Ford factory into a pipe factory, and if you play the game, there are mentions of how ludicrous it would be that pipes could be used to make a superweapon...

We were very much trying to reflect our times in some of the jokes. The judge in there is called Judge Chutney, who of course takes inspiration from Judge Pickles. And a lot was very much based on the society as it was then, the fact that Margaret Thatcher had come in and was creating a very divisive society, in terms of North/South social cohesion. We'd just had the miner's strike, which was very brutal. So you have Lamb who has a blatant Yorkshire accent... Then we had the Belle Vue [residential] sector... I was brought up in Wandsworth, on a road called Bellevue Road. To me it felt so pretentious to say 'Bellevue'. It's kind of like a '50s little England, where we so lack self-confidence that we use French words to try to give some sort of majesty to a place.

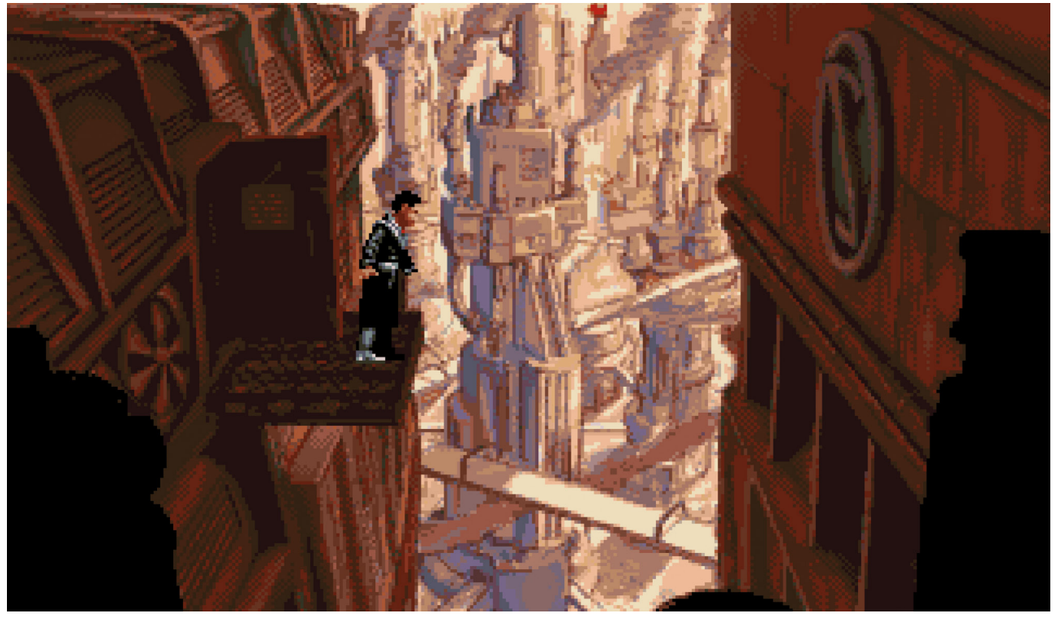
Can you describe the process of how you managed to integrate Dave's beautiful artwork so successfully into *Beneath a Steel Sky*, integrating animated backgrounds with billowing smokestacks, whirring machinery and the like?
The process was that we'd define the very rough layout. He would then draw it. It would go backwards and forwards by fax. Dave would then draw it in full resolution in pencil, and it was then shipped over to an artist called Les Pace, who would paint it. We would then scan and animate it. We have people like Steve Oades to thank for that, because it really honed his skill when it came to animation. I think Dave would then tweak the final result in Deluxe Paint. What we really wanted to do was to create something that felt different and new.

Did the vast commercial and critical success of *Beneath a Steel Sky* lead directly to *Broken Sword*?
Yes, when it came out it was very well received, and sold well. Virgin were thrilled, because they had been distributing LucasArts games, and they wanted us to increase our production values, because they wanted us to be able to compete directly with LucasArts. And, obviously, the games that LucasArts were producing cost exponentially more than the games that we were producing.

Noirin and I had dinner one evening with Sean [Brennan, Virgin Interactive's COO at the time], and he said, "We want an adventure game that'll compete directly with LucasArts – to do so it needs to make the most of CD-ROM." So we pitched the idea of an adventure game. He came back and said, "I've just read a book called *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco, and these people, the Knights Templar, are amazing." I only vaguely knew about them, and Noirin, who's from a town called Newcastle West, in County Limerick, knew much more than I did, because Newcastle West was actually a Templar town. But it felt like they could fit very well. He wanted them to be like anti-heroes. I wanted them to be more historical, and more historically accurate.

CHARLES CECIL INTERVIEW

▲ The courtyard scene where Diermot meets Grub in *Lure of the Temptress*.



▲ Foster exits the recycling plant in *Beneath a Steel Sky*, only to find a dead end.

George climbing the castle wall in *Broken Sword: The Shadow of the Templars* (*Circle of Blood* in the United States).

The interesting thing is that beyond *Foucault's Pendulum* there was a book called *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, which Dan Brown later either plagiarised or took inspiration from, depending on your particular opinion... And that was it. It was a very fertile ground on which to base a game.

***Broken Sword* marked a huge leap forward in visuals for graphic adventures at the time, with its large animated characters, fully voiced soundtrack, and incredible artwork and animation. Can you tell us a little about its development?**
I decided to set the game in Paris, one of the reasons for that being that I love Paris. I used to go as a child, and I remember very vividly the first time I went when I was probably about seven or eight. And I remembered how everything seemed different, and the colours were more vibrant. From an art perceptive, clearly we were going to a much higher resolution and we were going to 256 colours. The team was becoming more adept and more experienced in this. And the real breakthrough, in terms of the backgrounds and our production values is that I'd read in *Edge* [magazine] about a college called Ballyfermot, which had been set up to educate layout artists and animators for the Don Bluth studios that were based in Dublin. The Don Bluth studios had closed down, but there were still all of these students coming through, and they were available. *Edge* had written about how talented their animators were, so I went over and was met by the principal and the head of layout, a guy called Eoghan Cahill. He looked at some at the work we were doing and he squealed with laughter and said, "You need to employ me. I'll do a much better job." And he was absolutely right. He worked with us through *Broken Sword* and *Broken Sword 2*, and then continued to collaborate. He was just a very loyal, wonderful artist. Sadly, he passed away about halfway through *Broken Sword 5*. I owe him a great debt of gratitude, because he was a large part of the success of the way we transformed from the days of *Beneath a Steel Sky* and *Lure of the Temptress* to *Broken Sword*.

"I decided to set the game in Paris, one of the reasons for that being that I love Paris. I used to go as a child, and I remember very vividly the first time I went when I was probably about seven or eight. And I remembered how everything seemed different, and the colours were more vibrant."

Was Eoghan behind the Disney animation-style look of the game and the spectacular opening, where we witness a raven's journey from Notre Dame across Paris?
Yes, and what he did which was so wonderful, in that he understood how you could change the perspective of the camera, because ultimately the camera is just moving from left to right. But as it moves from left to right, you go from a view looking side-on at Notre Dame, and then the whole perspective changes to a view of the city...

George escapes Professor Oubier's house in *Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror.*

Looking for clues, George explores the Parisian streets in *Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse.*

Were the character animations of George and Nico and others in the game rotoscoped from live actors?
Yes, Steve did some rotoscoping. But it was a huge amount of work because what we needed to do was have the animators hand-draw the character's animation frames, then scan them in using a system from Cambridge Animation Systems that automatically filled the spaces between the line drawings. And if there were any gaps then it bled through and it had to be re-done – it was a massively time-consuming job. Then Steve Odes, who is very much a hero in all of this, took the results and just worked to hone them. So it was really the result of what was achieved through traditional animators and the visual fidelity of Steve, who was so experienced at this stage in pixel art.

Were you nervous about creating a 2D point-and-click adventure game on the Sony PlayStation, which was more famous for 3D action games?
When we were close to finishing *Broken Sword* on PC I'd been phoned up by a gentleman called Phil Harrison. Phil had done some work for me when I was at Activision, and he said that he was working for Sony and they had a new console that they were producing called the PSX. Obviously, PSX was the codename for what was to become the PlayStation. At this point, Nintendo and Sega were legendary, but I'd never spoken to anybody from Sega or Nintendo, and assumed that I never would do. And it was quite extraordinary because Sony were reaching out to developers, saying, "Will you come and write games for our platform?"

Broken Sword didn't appear to be the obvious game, but it was commissioned, although Virgin had no interest whatsoever. We did it on a shoestring. But, in those days, the official PlayStation magazine had a circulation of 600,000 a month across the UK, France and Germany. And the game was incredibly well-reviewed. It got nine out of ten in all those magazines. Huge coverage, cover-mounted... and it went on to sell really well. It just blew everybody's minds, because nobody had seen it coming, particularly us. And when we brought *Broken Sword 2* across and published it, there was an official PlayStation magazine reader's poll, and they put *Broken Sword 2* as the fifth best PlayStation game ever, ahead of a number of *Tomb Raiders*, ahead of *Resident Evil*. I mean, it was unbelievable! It just worked so well for the PlayStation demographic and nobody saw it coming.

Why do you think Revolution Software's games like *Beneath a Steel Sky* and the *Broken Sword* series are so highly rated and loved by players and fans still today?
Well we – the whole team that is – have always been very passionate about the games that we produce. And I think we punch way above our weight, because we really do care about the quality and the user experience. One of the most amazing experiences that we had was with our Kickstarter for *Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse*, and the joy of being able to communicate directly with our community. And I think that passion we've always had, and always will have, is kind of respected by people. I think people intuitively know that we care, whether that be on the story, the dialogue, the graphics, or the animation... And the games we write, which have never been particularly well-funded, have always been greater than the sum of their parts. You see many games that are, frankly, less than the sum of their parts, because a lot of money's been spent on them, but there isn't a soul that drives the whole thing. I would like to think that our games have soul...

1992

Police Quest: In Pursuit of the Death Angel
This enhanced remake of the original *Police Quest* bears almost no resemblance to its predecessor, thanks to the entirely new 256-colour VGA graphics, improved sound and fully mouse-driven point-and-click interface. While the story remains largely identical, the frustrating driving sections and compulsory mini-games have been simplified. It's also the first game in the series not to have unavoidable dead-ends.

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1993

Star Trek: Judgment Rites
Like its prequel, Interplay's *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, *Judgment Rites* is based on the original iconic 1960s TV series, and includes the full cast. Taking the role of Captain Kirk, the player gets to enjoy a range of genres, as point-and-click sections alternate with side-scrolling adventure and first-person starship combat sequences. There's a number of solutions to the puzzles but, like the TV show, a non-violent approach is always beneficial.

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Josh Mandel

Josh Mandel's experience as a stand-up comedian would stand him in good stead when he joined Sierra, where he was initially employed as a junior producer before working his way up to writer and designer roles. He worked on the *King's Quest* and *Space Quest* series, as well as contributing to *Leisure Suit Larry* and designing *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist*. More recently he was reunited with *Leisure Suit Larry* creator Al Lowe on *Leisure Suit Larry: Reloaded*.

When did you first decide that you wanted a career in video game development, and how did you come to work at Sierra?
From the first minute I played the original *Colossal Cave Adventure*, I knew I wanted to be involved in the creation of adventure games. The possibilities seemed limitless, and I didn't want just to play them, I wanted to help make them. I was working full-time in advertising after dabbling in stand-up comedy, and I didn't take the possibility of a career change seriously until I received a call from Guruka Singh Khalsa, the gentleman at Sierra through whom I did most of my beta testing. He was incredibly overburdened, serving as producer to every product Sierra was developing and wanted to know if I'd be interested in interviewing to become a junior producer.

Was it exciting to be working on adventure games during the height of their popularity?
Tremendously exciting, yes. I experienced a sense of parallel with my father, who had been a highly successful screenwriter during the Golden Age of television, the days of live drama, and he had in that way been a formative force in – what was then – a whole new category of entertainment. It seemed to me that I was accomplishing much the same thing. I also felt strongly that this was a way for me to resume a career in comedy, only now I would be performing through the characters I was creating on-screen. And while this form of comedy would provide less immediate feedback – I could no longer hear the laughter or the applause, and so change my performance to fit the feel of the crowd – it would, on the other hand, reach an arguably wider audience, and to use comedy to tell a story in a way that one couldn't readily do in a comedy club.

Your first point-and-click game at Sierra was the remake of Roberta Williams' *King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown*. What was your role in the development?
I was assigned to be a junior producer on that project. It had languished for a long time, with Roberta unavailable to put time into it as she was up to her neck in *King's Quest V*. So it was already well underway when I was placed on the project. The text for the game had all been ported over from the original version, and that text was sparse to say the least. I had a strong urge to expand it and help illuminate the visuals. So I asked Guruka whether or not I had leeway to rewrite the text as part of the assignment – and he, in turn, directed me to ask Roberta. This was my first interaction with her and, as a long-time Sierra fan, my heart was in my mouth. Roberta immediately agreed to my plan, with the stipulation of course that she would review all the text and edit it as she saw fit. In the end, she changed almost nothing of what I wrote and also agreed to my alteration of the infamous Rumplestiltskin puzzle to make it a great deal easier. The only objection I can remember her raising was at the very end of the game when King Edward lay dying on the throne room floor. Graham was there with his three treasures, one of which was the magic mirror that figured so heavily in *King's Quest IV*. As a joke (mostly), I had King Edward's dying words be something like, "I think the mirror would look best on that wall, over there". Although I wrote it to be funny – but also relevant, since the mirror does appear on the indicated wall in later games – I would've left it in if Roberta had let me. But she said, "I don't think King Edward would be giving interior decorating tips with his dying breath".

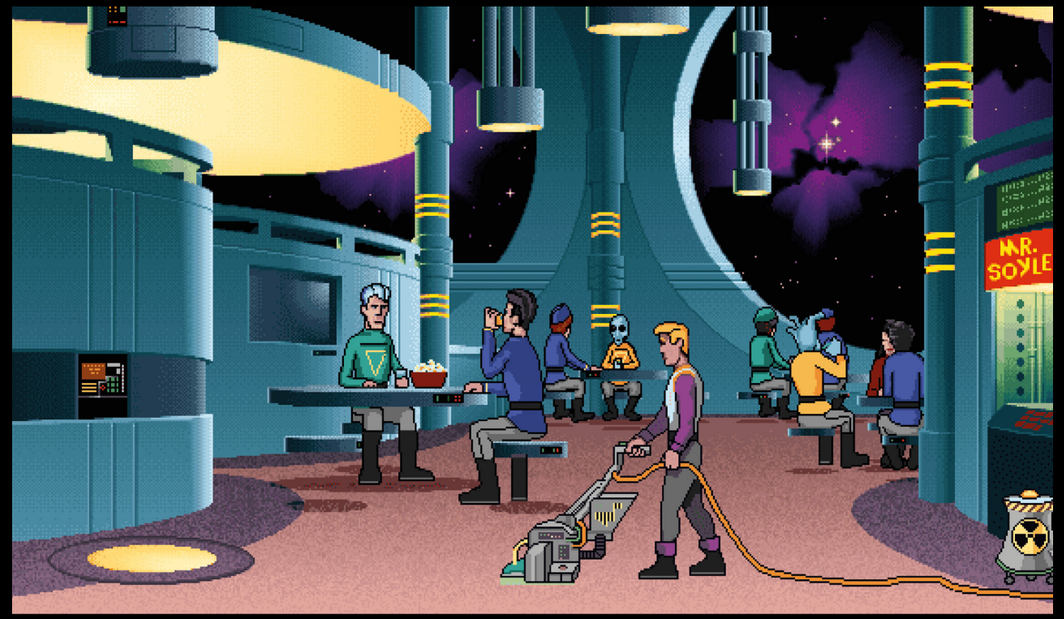
"I think Al and I had what was a pretty close to ideal working relationship. While I didn't have the experience designing games that he had, he didn't have the experience writing and performing comedy that I did."

Were you pleased with how it turned out?
Very much so. For one thing, there were no bugs of any size – that was always a significant concern. The last thing we wanted was for someone to get the game home and find that it wouldn't boot, or that it would crash at some point. For another, the graphic improvements were substantial. One detail, in particular, was a point of pride: the fact that the artwork for the rooms was contiguous and that the rooms would appear to change by scrolling from left to right – and even vertically, in the case of climbing up or down the beanstalk. This was a first for any Sierra game, and the improvement was immediately passed to all the other teams for inclusion in their games. Most important, for me, is that I was successfully able to mimic Roberta's writing style, enough so that we got no feedback, from either players or critics, saying, "This is clearly not Roberta's writing". As I was soliciting writing opportunities from the designers, I wanted to be a chameleon, to have my writing fit seamlessly with the designers', no matter which project I was on. So I took it as a great source of pride that I was able to write virtually all the text and dialogue in *King's Quest I* and make it unnoticeable that it wasn't actually Roberta.

JOSH MANDEL INTERVIEW

▲ *Roberta Williams' King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown* was updated in 1990 using the enchanced SCI engine.

▲ Freddy explores the barber shop in *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist*.



▲ A scene from *Space Quest 6* where a demoted Roger is back working as a janitor.

▲ Larry enters the Come-n-go shop to buy some 'protection' in *Leisure Suit Larry: Reloaded*.

JOSH MANDEL INTERVIEW

Your first original title was *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist*. Were you involved in creating the art style for this game?
To a great extent, yes. I worked in a room with the programmers, and the room next door had our four artists: Bob Gleason (our lead artist), Ruben Huante, Karin Nestor, and Phy 'No Relation' Williams. And I was in and out of there dozens of times a day, looking at backgrounds-in-progress and animations and so on. I really had to be, because there were certain jokes I wanted to tell that depended on the rooms and animations doing such-and-such, and other jokes that I wanted to tell because of what the artists were bringing to the game out of their own imaginations. It was a symbiotic relationship. Our backgrounds were all sketched out on paper, hand-painted, and then scanned in. We were probably one of the last games at Sierra to do it that way. I have a few of the backgrounds, and a few of Ruben's hand-painted talkers, to this day, and I treasure them dearly. One of the backgrounds is the six foot long painting that Bob Gleason did for Main Street, seven or eight screens long, which had been framed shortly after production and was tossed in the trash when the Oakhurst studio shut down. It was rescued by Sierra designer Susan Frischer, who knew I'd want it.

What was it like working with Al Lowe?
I think Al and I had what was a pretty close to ideal working relationship. While I didn't have the experience designing games that he had, he didn't have the experience writing and performing comedy that I did. So while I knew that he was the final word on everything, he gave me tremendous leeway to try things, and he was terrific about saying, "Well, that works!", and leaving in what I did. I had – and have – great respect for him, and I wanted to knock it out of the park for him. Sometimes I think he was less 'giving me leeway' and more 'giving me enough rope to hang myself', but I ended up never hanging myself, so it all worked out. Al and I both have a great deal of fondness for certain old comedy acts, such as Stan Freberg and Bob and Ray, and I think this gave us a lot of common ground.

Were you proud of the positive reviews for *Freddy Pharkas*?
The reviews were tremendously heartening to me, because it showed me that my brand of humour could translate well to games. In particular, the review in *Computer Gaming World* made me incredibly happy, not just because it was so positive, but because it was written by Charles Ardai. He was the one reviewer at *CGW* at the time whose opinion I greatly respected, long before he reviewed *Freddy*. I had no idea he'd be the one reviewing the game, and if he hadn't liked it I think that would've been depressing. On the other hand, sales were slow. It hadn't helped that the sales department had gotten off to a very slow start selling the game to stores. One aspect of Sierra games that factored into that was that our adventure titles were always behind schedule, months late to come out. But *Freddy* was an exception; we actually made our release date and our budget, which was unheard of. So, two weeks after *Freddy* was shipped out, I ran into the head of sales in the hallway, and he asked, "So, how's *Freddy* coming along?" My jaw dropped, and I said to him, "Are you kidding? We made our release date. It's already shipped." His eyes got wide, and he gulped and said, "Oh! We'd better start selling it, then!" But, of course, by then we had missed our window, so we were hampered from the start. Fortunately, while the game didn't sell strongly out of the gate, it did enjoy steady sales.

You then worked on *Space Quest 6*. What was your role in the development?
I was co-designer, along with Scott Murphy, who was still trying to find his role at Sierra after the breakup of the Two Guys from Andromeda [the partnership Murphy formed with Mark Crowe]. Since the plot of the game had been my idea, I took the lead, and every day I'd write up the design for a room or two and put it on Scott's desk. He took them, but his heart wasn't in it, and I don't think he ever really read them or bought into the whole idea of the game. I would have these long talks with him about what my thoughts were about where to take the game and the series, and he would just agree with whatever I said. I'm sure that, given his battles with management, the entire series had lost its lustre for him. In retrospect, I'm sure he wishes he'd taken more of an active role in shaping *Space Quest 6* at the outset, because once I left the company, he was left to flesh out a game that he wasn't invested in.

Did you have a free reign with the direction?
I'm happy to say I had a free reign. In *Space Quest 6*, I felt a strong need to return to Roger's roots as a loser who stumbles into his good luck rather than making it himself. That seemed very difficult to do as long as Roger was the captain of his own ship, which is what happened in *Space Quest V*. So I had Roger busted back down to janitor. This, I felt, also nicely mirrored the *Star Trek* movie franchise, which saw Admiral Kirk busted back down to captain. I also shied away from exploring the romance between Roger and Beatrice. We knew from *Space Quest IV* that she and Roger would end up married, but I reasoned that that would never be a straight line. How often is romance a straight line? And with Roger, wouldn't it be even less so? At the same time, it seemed to me that Roger should have a fan. Somebody who had actually tracked his accomplishments and appreciated them. That was Stellar. I didn't envision her as creating a love triangle with Roger and Beatrice in any way, although that was how some players interpreted it – that Stellar was going to compete with Beatrice for Roger's affections.

You also worked with Al Lowe again to create *Leisure Suit Larry: Reloaded*. What was the story behind getting involved with this project?
The head of Replay Games, Paul Trowe, had become convinced that there would be a market for a remake of *Leisure Suit Larry*. *Larry* was the one property of Sierra's that had not been sold off to Activision, but rather to Codemasters, and Paul had enough of an 'in' there that he was able to convince them to loan him the license. So Paul contacted Al and me, and we were both game, especially since it meant that Al and I would be working together again. Unfortunately, Replay, being a very small operation, did not have the funds to develop the game themselves, so we Kickstarted it – a highly stressful, exhausting endeavour. But we were successful enough that we even had a little extra money to add some new puzzles, a new woman to capture Larry's interest, and a new location. While the game should've been a fun and enjoyable time, it turned out to be the single most stressful project I've ever worked on – in part, because the fans who Kickstarted the game all had their own ideas of how to update Larry, and were vocal and persistent that their wishes be honoured, but also in part because of what was going on behind the scenes at Replay. That story could fill another book!

1993

Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist

Inspired by the movie *Blazing Saddles*, Al Lowe and Josh Mandel created what is sometimes described as the funniest point-and-click adventure ever made. Using a command bar at the top of the screen it plays similarly to other Sierra titles, with successful actions contributing to the player's overall score. The cast of characters include Madame Ovaree, who runs the local brothel, Doc 'Dizzy' Gillespie, the drunken town doctor, and 'Kenny the Kid', a cartoonish version of Sierra's founder Ken Williams.

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▲ *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist* features stereotypical Wild West locations, all brought to life through beautiful hand-drawn 256-colour backgrounds and scaling sprites.

1993

Maniac Mansion: Day of the Tentacle

Inspired by Chuck Jones cartoons, *Day of the Tentacle*'s unique art style and comedy storyline has ensured its cult status with fans some 25 years later. Like it's prequel, *Maniac Mansion*, solving puzzles in the game relies on switching between three characters: Bernard, Hoagie and Laverne. You also need to think fourth-dimensionally in this time-travel comedy, as past actions can affect the present day. It's tough work defeating Purple Tentacle, adventure gaming's most diabolical villain!

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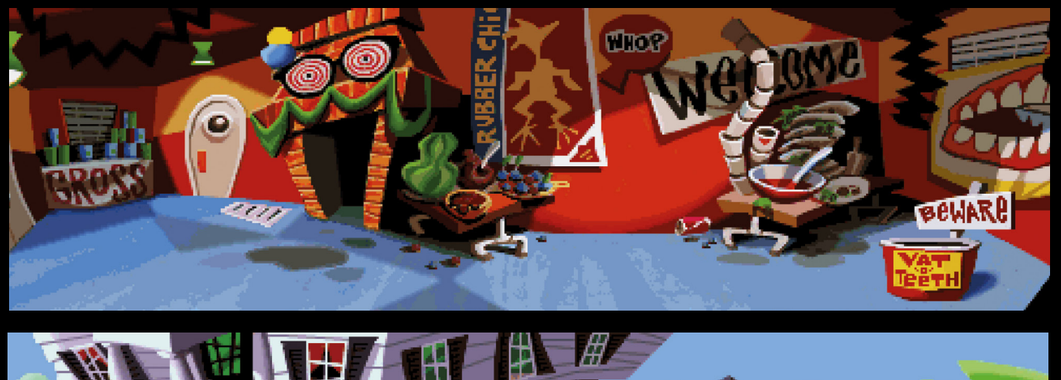

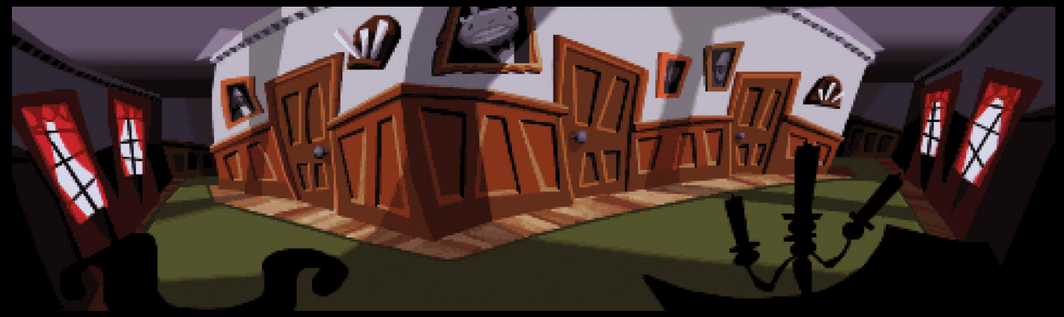

▲ The many scenes in *Day of the Tentacle* change according to the historical period, as the game covers a 400-year time span.

1993

Myst
This first-person point-and-click adventure was designed by brothers Robyn and Rand Miller, and – up until 2002 – was the world's best-selling PC game. The visuals represented a big step forward at the time, its ultra-realistic renders relying heavily on the emerging CD-ROM technology. *Myst*'s interface is reduced to a single cursor for navigation and interaction; rather than look for items, gameplay focuses on finding subtly placed clues and manipulating complex machinery.

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Robyn Miller

Robyn Charles Miller can list game designer, composer, author, director and actor on his enviable CV, but it's his association with Cyan's *Myst* series that has given him lasting fame. The game was a staggering success all over the world and turned Robyn and his brother, Rand, into celebrities overnight. Robyn parted company with Cyan after the release of the sequel *Riven* in 1997 to pursue fresh creative challenges outside of the games arena. He marked his directorial debut with the 2013 fictional documentary *The Immortal Augustus Gladstone*.

How did you break into computer software development, and what was your role at Cyan?
When we first started, I had zero intention of going into games or starting a company. I was going to the University of Washington, studying anthropology. I didn't play games. I wasn't interested in games. My focus was school. In 1984, the Macintosh was released and my brother Rand bought one. I'd had access to other personal computers before, but the Mac blew me away. I had never been able to connect with a computer so freely and directly. I was able to interact immediately. It was mind-blowing to be able to draw with this thing called a 'mouse'. I almost instantly realised that maybe this was a new way to make art; maybe this was a bona fide medium. Fast-forward a couple of years to 1987, and I was living in Seattle, going to the University of Washington, and using the Mac to make a little extra money doing freelance design and illustration. Around this time, Rand sent me a letter about a software tool called HyperCard. He felt that, using this tool, we might be able to create something like an interactive children's book. Rand sent me a copy of HyperCard and I immediately began playing around with the built-in drawing tools. The first thing I drew was a manhole cover. Without considering the fact that I was making a game, I spontaneously drew an animation of the manhole opening and a vine growing up into the sky. Rand's idea had been to turn virtual pages, like a book. I realised that I wanted to climb up the vine and explore. As I drew more, this first fantastic universe grew and grew and, without knowing it, this is how we cemented the foundation for our simple point-and-click interface. All of our following products, including *Myst*, would evolve out of this interface. *The Manhole* was never seriously meant for public consumption; I never thought all of my scribblings would see the light of day but, when Rand began to react to wandering around the stuff I was sending him, I think we realised we had tapped into something. We understood that we might be able to release this thing. Rand re-scripted everything. He cleaned up my mess to work as a commercial product should work, and he did voices. Our first version of *The Manhole* was originally self-published under Rand's already existing company: Prolog. When we got a distributor, we created Cyan.

Why was HyperCard your software development platform of choice?
HyperCard was an interface that removed all impediments to the creative process. Working on that platform often felt like pure creation, like painting or writing. It often felt as if there was no interface, nothing standing in the way of the end goal. Honestly, a simple web page today is more convoluted to build than a simple HyperCard stack, 30 years ago. I liken HyperCard to something like Lego or *Minecraft*; it was simple enough for a five-year-old (and in fact, my five-year-old at the time used it to make simple games), but it was sophisticated enough to make commercially viable products. Over the years, a lot of people have attempted to re-create HyperCard, but I think these clones have always gotten bogged down in additional features. Simplicity was the beauty of HyperCard.

***The Manhole* was quite groundbreaking for its time. What were the influences behind it, and why did you make it a CD-ROM title?**
After *The Manhole* was released, CD-ROMs were out, and there was some pressure for Activision, our publisher, to be one of the first companies to get a CD-ROM game to market. *The Manhole* was a natural fit because the game was originally released on five floppies, which was a bummer. However, that small amount of data barely scratches the surface of a CD-ROM. Activision wanted to add a soundtrack, so they hired a composer and wrote a score. This was all happening a little out of our control; the music felt tacked on and out-of-place, a device to sell CD-ROMs for a game that wasn't that great in the first place.

Where did the idea for *Cosmic Osmo and the Worlds Beyond the Mackerel* come from?
Rand and I were much more intentional with *Osmo*. Together, we were able to come up with the overall concept. For the majority of production, we sat together in the same small room, throwing ideas back and forth as we worked our way through it. Besides *Myst*, it was probably the most fun we've ever had working together. When I look at it now, I wonder, where did we get all this twisted stuff? I wonder, what drugs were these guys on? It's a very surreal and insane world that we created. I especially enjoy the (purposeful) inconsistency of scale.

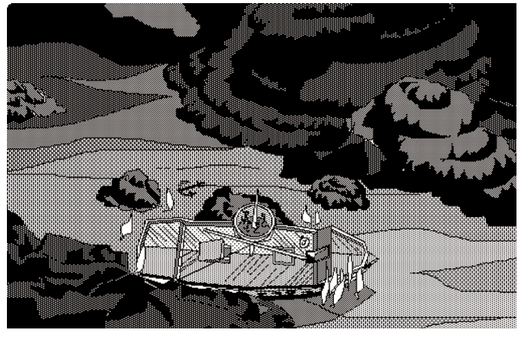
***Spelunx* has been described variously as a first-person point-and-click adventure, a software toy, and an educational game. How would you describe it yourself, and what was your goal in designing it?**
Spelunx wasn't exactly a high point. I think part of that had to do with the constraints of our budget. Cyan was in desperate straits; *Spelunx* was a last-ditch effort to save the company and keep making games. So the world was small, with minimal animation. It was a hodge-podge of loosely-connected activities and implied characters. We were able to get it done quickly. The idea of expandability interested us, and we hoped that, eventually, we would have been able to release additional *Spelunx* rooms, but there was never enough interest. And it was the first product we marketed ourselves; we had no idea how to do that. I think there were cool aspects to the design, but it wasn't overly consistent, and the underground world felt a little claustrophobic.

"In 1984, the Macintosh was released and my brother, Rand, bought one. I'd had access to other personal computers before, but the Mac blew me away. I had never been able to connect with a computer so freely and directly. I was able to interact immediately. It was mind-blowing to be able to draw with this thing called a 'mouse'."

Tell us about *The Gray Summons*. What was the original concept for it, and why do you think Activision turned it down?
We had a lot of fun creating light-hearted games, but we didn't have an interest in building children's games forever. I'd grown up experiencing this foundation of incredible films: *Star Wars*, *2001*, *Alien*, *Blade Runner*... These mythic, larger-than-life worlds spoke to me. Those film worlds were true; our little games seemed trite in comparison. *The Grey Summons* was our initial attempt to embed elements of story and character into a world that felt real. We came to a conclusion that may seem obvious today: that the player would be the main character. Importantly, in *The Gray Summons*, we wanted the player to imagine and act as if they were really in this world, rather than play some invented character. Additionally, we believed that the player should have to experience a moral dilemma and make some sort of ethical decision that would have consequences. Activision turned it down for two reasons: first, our pitch to the execs was bad. But more importantly, we were already successfully making kids' games for them. Why would we want to interrupt that apparent success with something so risky? Many of these core elements that we were experimenting with in *The Gray Summons*, later found their way into *Myst*.

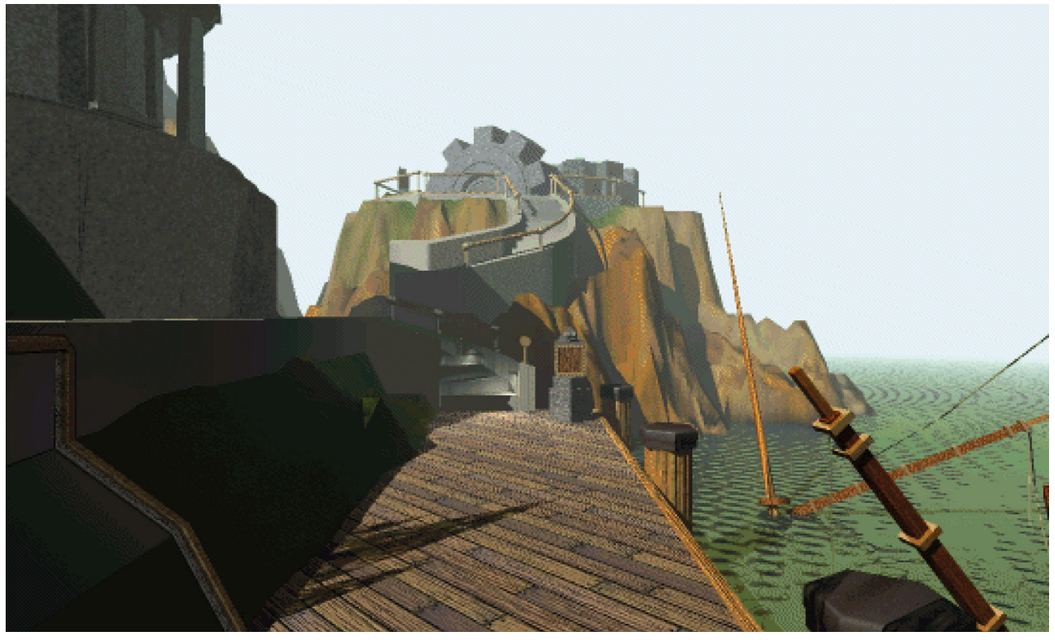
During your career, did you tend to take care of the art side of your games?
I hand-drew the art for our early 1-bit children's games: *The Manhole*, *Cosmic Osmo* and *Spelunx*. For *Myst*, we knew the game would be in colour, but before we began production I thought I would be drawing or painting it as well. I experimented with a few different styles for about a day. I remember getting very disheartened because we wanted something cinematic, and dramatic. It had to be taken seriously. I didn't know how I would hand-paint all the art we needed to create. Out of desperation, I turned to StrataVision 3D, which I'd been playing around with, but I wasn't sure it could handle visuals like the geometry of an entire island, covered with trees. My first attempt at creating Myst island in Strata 3D was a half-hearted experiment because I expected it to fail. It was a huge relief when it worked so well. Chuck Carter and I divided the art on *Myst*. Each of us took different islands and I think you can see our distinct voices in the separate locations.

How did the Sunsoft deal come about, and what was it that attracted them to you?
Sunsoft had real vision, and they took an enormous risk on us. They had developed a version of *The Manhole* for a Japanese console called the NEC PC Engine. They



▲ *The Manhole* was originally released on the Apple Macintosh in 1988.

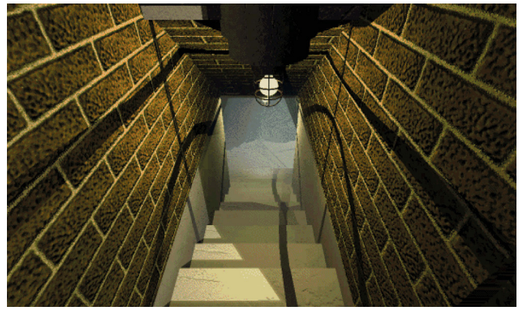
▲ *Spelunx* was Cyan's third game to be programmed using HyperCard.



▲ *Myst* make great use of CD-ROM technology, which allowed pre-rendered graphics – something totally new for a point-and-click adventure.

liked *The Manhole* and, unbeknownst to us, around the time we were working on *Spelunx*, they were becoming interested in getting us to make something similar to our children's worlds, but aimed at an adult audience, which is precisely what we were dreaming of doing. They approached us out of the blue and asked if we'd be interested in accepting funding for a project of this kind. We were floored. They funded our development and, what's more, they respected our creative process like no company I've ever worked with to this day.

How did you devise the storyline for *Myst*, and how did it evolve as development of the game progressed?
We began with the idea that *Myst* should maintain a believable and compelling narrative and characters. The player needed to feel this world was real and empathise with the characters. Honestly, we had no idea to what degree we could accomplish our dreams for the project, but we felt that we'd have the greatest chance of achieving this stuff if we kept things simple. That meant a simple mystery with the player as the protagonist. One brother was bad, one was good; the player would have to decide between them. Achenar seemed more overtly mad, but we were going to plant clues that Sirrus, the more spoiled and intelligent of the two, had manipulated Achenar to his own sociopathic ends. We designed the islands and gameplay around this concept over an initial two-month period. Rand and I sat in a room, discussing and sketching. During this, we came up with the idea of linking books and the missing pages. We designed all the puzzles and filled in all the gaps in the story. We did a lot in a short amount of time. There wasn't a lot of second-guessing because we



▲ The huge popularity of *Myst* meant that, until 2002, it was the world's best-selling PC game. It has sold an estimated 6 million copies globally.

didn't have time for that. It was late in our design that we realised the mystery wasn't entirely working. Players couldn't or wouldn't root for Achenar or Sirrus. We needed the twist at the end of the story: the father character – the true and only protagonist. As we tested, we saw that people enjoyed the game, but they weren't immediately engaging with the narrative. We went back to the drawing board and added elements to help incite the player to action: a note on the path; a recording of Atrus in the 'fore-chamber'. These things helped immensely.

"We had certain aspirations when we created Myst. *We wanted to create something cinematic. We wanted to create a world with zero distractions – a place, a world, where you could totally lose yourself."*

Is it fair to say that *Myst* wasn't really aimed at traditional gamers?
We had certain aspirations when we created *Myst*. We wanted to create something cinematic. We wanted to create a world with zero distractions – a place, a world, where you could totally lose yourself. The idea that it might feel or act like a traditional 'game' was anathema to us. We knew there must be nothing to learn. Nothing to read. No menus. No controls. When we began *Myst*, we didn't have a strong philosophy about puzzles, which is why the puzzles on Myst Island

▲ Although never reaching the success of *Myst*, *Riven: The Sequel to Myst* boasted better visuals, a bigger world to explore and more complex puzzles.

and a couple of other islands feel arbitrary and disconnected to the story. As we worked our way through the design, we began to realise that puzzles should always be a direct expression of the story, to the extent that puzzles should never obviously feel like puzzles; they should feel like another prong of the broader mystery. They should feel like interactions with characters. In this regard, we were scratching the surface with *Myst*.

***Myst's* influences include *Star Wars*, Jules Verne, C.S. Lewis, *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Zork*. How did each of these inform the design of the game?**
The name *Myst* and the concept of islands were directly inspired by the book *Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne, which I was reading when we got the gig. We knew we needed a method to link from one age to another age. We wanted it to feel magical, like when the children fall into the painting in one of the *Narnia* books. Rand and I specifically talked about that example and felt that we should come up with something just as compelling – or more compelling. We, at last, landed on books. The dream was to have the player place their hand on the page of the book. The image would grow and overwhelm the player and, at last, they would 'fall' into the world of the book. But the technology didn't allow for this. We could only do a fade to black, followed by a linking sound. We always anticipated that future updates would include changes like this. But for each of these influences, there's probably a list of 100 more things I don't talk about, because they don't make convenient soundbites. Growing up all over the US and going to ten different schools by the seventh grade was unquestionably more critical to my creative perspective. Or having epilepsy. Even the environment of Spokane had a massive impact on the look and feel of *Myst*.

***Myst's* graphics were all pre-rendered. How were the visuals created, and what sort of technology did you use?**
StrataVision 3D, which is still available, Photoshop, Illustrator, morphing software, and lots of little odds and ends.

"The name Myst *and the concept of islands were directly inspired by the book* Mysterious Island *by Jules Verne, which I was reading when we got the gig."*

Ethical and emotional decisions are incorporated into *Myst's* gameplay. Was this something you wanted from the start, or did these aspects of the game evolve over time?
The idea was that we wanted the player to experience an ethical dilemma similar to real life – to maybe feel a little tortured about what might be the right decision and what might be the wrong decision, and to realise that their choice had consequences. We had these very lofty goals, though I think we recognised it would all be a bit of an experiment. In neither *Myst* nor *Riven*, I don't think we pulled any of this off. Our big consequential decisions don't stick with the player at all; that part of the goal failed. I don't think this is why people enjoyed these games – I'm not even sure it was an essential goal in the first place. That's not to say that something like that is utterly impossible. It might work, but a game would have to be constructed entirely differently. I feel the player would have to have a wholly different style of relationship with characters; it's hard to relate to a cutscene.

How did you come to compose the music for the game?
We thought of *Myst* as a world. A first-person experience: a true place. It was our goal to make that universe seem as real and believable as possible and, to that end, we didn't want to distract the player with anything that caused the world to appear contrived. In terms of music, there isn't a soundtrack to our lives. Often the tensest or most terrifying moments in cinema are accompanied by silence. This was the philosophy we started out with for the game. Brøderbund, our publisher, was starting to get excited about the cinematic nature of the game and felt the product needed a soundtrack. At a certain point, they wanted to hire a composer to see how it sounded. That's when we got a little terrified. We'd already been through this with *The Manhole*, and we understood that, if the game were to contain music, it would require something ambient, possibly electronic. It would need a sound that fit with the otherworldly feel of the visuals. I wrote a test piece for the planetarium. We plugged it into the game, and I think we were all surprised that it worked as well as it did. We decided to include a score, and I rushed to compose and sequence all the pieces.

How did you test *Myst* once it was playable?
I think the most helpful way that we tested *Myst* was our own in-house game testing. This was a relatively straightforward sort of thing: we'd find random people, those who didn't play games and those who did, and we'd sit them down in front of the game. It was always important to give them no instruction other than a simple, "You are yourself in this game. You aren't playing a role. Do what you would do if you were really in this world." Rand and I would stand behind player's backs, taking notes, often

fixing small problems on the fly. We wanted the world to work exactly as players expected it to work. Many years later, the concept of 'The Stranger' evolved out of nowhere, becoming the player's popularised avatar in *Myst* lore. This was opposite to our intentions throughout the games.

"We bought about 12 insanely expensive workstations and a refrigerator-sized server, all of which are now completely obsolete, and worthless. It was a different feeling in the workplace than Myst. *We were divided into teams. Rand and I rarely worked together."*

Why do you think *Myst* was such a big seller?
Myst's success was insane. Nothing about our design deserved such a ridiculous amount of popularity. The stars aligned. Near its release, people were beginning to talk – a buzz was starting. We began to wonder if it might enjoy some amount of success, though we never dreamed that we'd be talking about it 20 years later. So I'll never be able to explain why it was such a massive seller, but I can explain our approach to making the game and why that may have attracted people. Having been early Mac users, Rand and I were sensitive to interface design. With *Myst*, we set the goal of creating something that felt void of interface. Back in 1993, few families, relative to today, owned a computer. As weird as it sounds, some people were intimidated by a mouse. We wanted to create something that felt instantly familiar. We didn't want to attract people to a game; we wanted to draw people to the larger world of computers and make something as familiar as walking through a forest. No rules. No learning. Anyone, young or old, with zero instructions, was able to immediately navigate the world from a first-person perspective. This friendliness was a big plus. We used to call it an 'invisible' interface. We believed that back then. Looking back, it had its own problems, but we were close enough that people responded. It was also a safe world. Our audience responded to the fact that they couldn't die. This was a decision which evolved out of our earlier games. We felt that allowing the player to die was an annoying and unnecessary artifice. Our largely non-gamer players were thrilled that they didn't have to escape danger and death. Instead, *Myst* was a more cerebral exploration. This was probably one of the bigger reasons for the buzz around *Myst*. There were some other lucky things that helped spread the word; the press really latched onto the story of brothers Robyn and Rand, these two guys who lived in the middle of nowhere. The pastor's sons. And reporters would come up to the northwest to visit us, and they'd realise just how much our area of the country looked like Myst Island. It was the perfect story that, in some ways, mirrored the narrative of the game. All of that snowballed. I think people weren't just buying *Myst*; they were buying this larger-than-life story of the Miller brothers. There wasn't a *Myst* article that didn't mention 'The Miller Brothers' living in Spokane, Washington. People loved that connection. It helped to create the perfect storm.

What would you like to have done differently?
By the release, it began to become apparent that we'd approached the design a little too 'improvisationally'. I think that approach gave the world a fun and surreal look; spaceships, giant gears, old schooners and planetariums. However, this weird and disparate stuff, especially many of the puzzles, told the player very little about the characters or the narrative. I don't talk about it much, but it was sloppy. For *Riven*, we took a more holistic, multi-tiered approach. Unlike *Myst*, we began with a comprehensive design of our narrative, really fleshing out the characters and the entire narrative. We knew that everything in our design had to be subservient to the story. Every puzzle, every location, every object, and so on. We were never thinking in terms of, "Oh, that's a cool puzzle". Instead, we were trying to get inside Gehn's head – how would this twisted guy try to thwart unwanted guests? Or what would this guy be doing to continually prove his power to the indigenous peoples? Designing *Riven* was a process of digging into his psyche and designing from his point of view. That's almost the opposite of how we approached *Myst*, where we often came up with puzzles first and shoved the story into it. So the puzzles were not necessarily subservient to the story; instead, puzzles felt largely arbitrary. Which is ironic, because our stated design goals were primarily story and character. I think it was a failure to understand our own process.

***Riven* was originally called 'Equiquay'. Where did that name come from, and why did you decide to change it?**
Choosing the name for *Riven* was like pulling teeth. Choosing the name for *Myst* was spontaneous; Rand and I on a phone, plucking the name out of thin air. The stakes weren't high. We allowed ourselves to have fun with it. We allowed ourselves to be inspired by the visuals and by the world we were creating – no second-guessing. It was all second-guessing while choosing the name for *Riven*. Second-guessing is a disease in design and art. It stifles creativity. And when a production begins making creative decisions based on market demand and demographics, creativity is squashed.

How did the development process of *Riven* differ from *Myst*?
We bought about 12 insanely expensive workstations and a refrigerator-sized server, all of which are now completely obsolete, and worthless. It was a different feeling in the workplace than *Myst*. We were divided into teams. Rand and I rarely worked together. He oversaw the programming department. Overall, I'm very proud of the game. We took a lot of risks, and those risks paid off. Given our knowledge at the time, and the limited collective experience we were building upon, I think we did a decent job of bringing something new to the world.

One critic said that the game approached the level of art. Do you think that games are a form of art?
Whether or not it was art, as in fine art, I don't know. It was design. We were crafting something. I do think games can be art. I didn't make *Riven* for the purpose of making art; I made it because I wanted to get lost in the world. I love creating worlds. I made it for the challenge of doing something new that had never been done. I wanted to give back to the people who loved *Myst*.

What are your plans for the future, and do you think you might ever return to interactive entertainment as a designer or creator?
I'd love nothing more than to make games. I feel like it's taken 20 years of hindsight, away from the industry, to wrap my head around what might make an intriguing game. I'd love to take on that challenge again. I'm also busy with Zoo Break, our film and episodic production company. We have a number of projects under our belt, and we continually work on others.

1993

Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up or Slip Out!
Edging ever closer to being a playable adult cartoon, this is the first *Leisure Suit Larry* game with SVGA graphics and character voice acting. After losing on a dating show, Larry wins a trip to a health spa called La Costa Lotta which is pretty much run entirely by women. While there are plenty of traditional inventory-based puzzles, this instalment also focuses on trying to convince various women that Larry isn't a complete failure.

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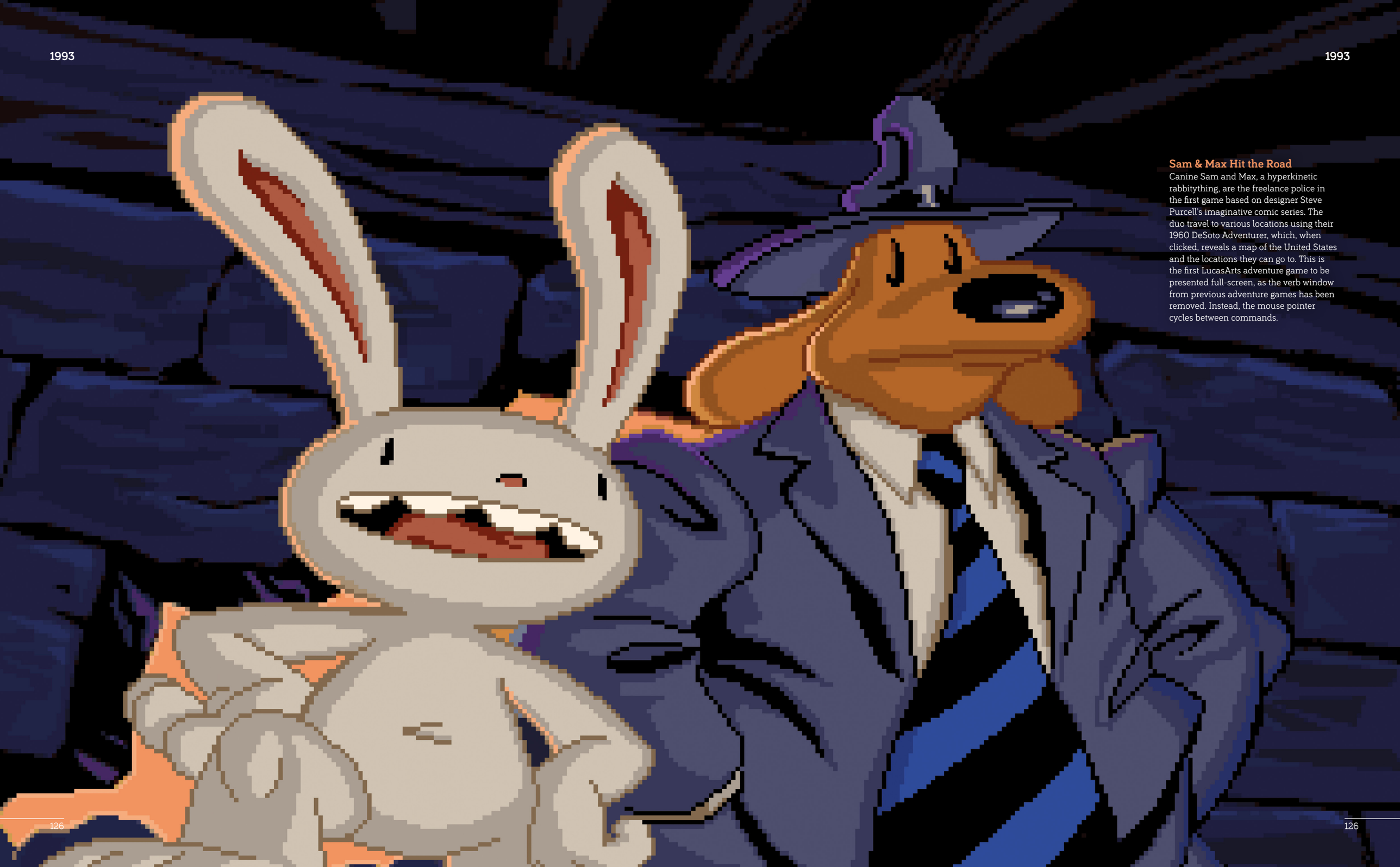
1993



Sam & Max Hit the Road

Canine Sam and Max, a hyperkinetic rabbitything, are the freelance police in the first game based on designer Steve Purcell's imaginative comic series. The duo travel to various locations using their 1960 DeSoto Adventurer, which, when clicked, reveals a map of the United States and the locations they can go to. This is the first LucasArts adventure game to be presented full-screen, as the verb window from previous adventure games has been removed. Instead, the mouse pointer cycles between commands.

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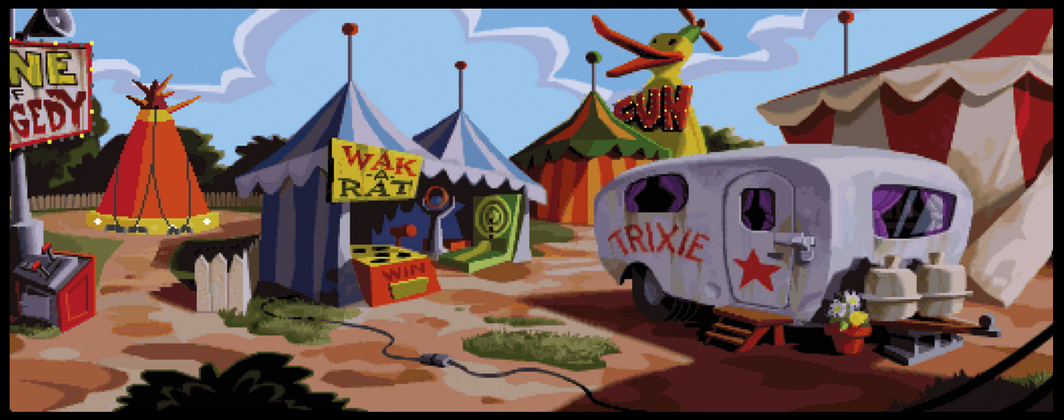

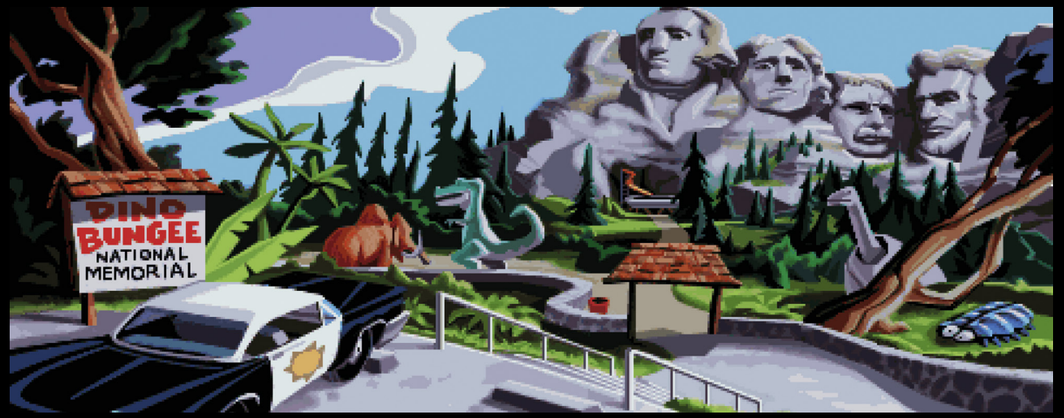

▲ Their road trip takes *Sam & Max* across most of America, where they visit an array of bizarre locations that embrace the cultural diversity of everyday American life...

Collette Michaud

Michaud began her career in the interactive entertainment industry in 1987, and joined Lucasfilm as an art manager in 1990. She rose to the role of art director and, in 1996, joined Lucas Learning, an offshoot of LucasArts focused on educational titles. In 2001, Michaud left the software industry to raise her family. She founded the The Children's Museum of Sonoma County in 2005 and currently serves as the museum's CEO.

Can you tell the story of how you got your job at Lucasfilm?
I'd been working as the art department manager at The Learning Company down in Fremont with Ron Winnick, the younger brother of Gary Winnick, who was the art director at Lucasfilm Games before it was renamed to LucasArts. Ron told me about the job opening and I applied for the position of art manager for the artists working at the new San Rafael location of Lucasfilm Games.

What was the working environment like?
When I started, there were only about 60 people in the company and we were all crammed into a fairly small building called 'A Building' in San Rafael. The games division had gotten too big to be housed out at the Ranch any longer, so they moved most of the employees down to San Rafael. I was one of only two women in an art department of 14 people. As the art manager, I shared an office with seven other male artists. Four other artists were in another small office next door, and then two others were down the hall in an office with two programmers. Needless to say, the working environment was very cozy! One of the best things about the environment was a large room in the middle of the second floor with a bunch of couches. It was used mostly for impromptu meetings, but many of us would often hang out there late into the evenings since we were all mostly young, single, and worked unnecessarily long hours because we had no lives outside of work. It was, in many ways, like a family.

Which art software packages did you use?
When I started we were using Deluxe Paint to do both backgrounds and animations. On-screen resolution was minimal with only 256 colours. Within the year though, the background artists started using Photoshop and scanners. All of a sudden, artists were able to draw on paper and scan in their artwork rather than using a mouse. Photoshop also increased the colours available for use into the millions, which really broadened and improved the quality of the background work.

"Apparently, before I started work there, he had been working for months on her with some of the other male animators and just wasn't happy with the results. He felt her character needed a woman's touch."

You were heavily involved with classic games such as *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* and *Monkey Island 2*. Can you tell us what it was like working on them?
I was the lead animator on *Indiana Jones*; working with Hal Barwood was a great experience. He was funny, warm, smart and strongly opinionated. He brought me onto the team primarily to animate the main character in the game [Sophia Hapgood]. Apparently, before I started work there, he had been working for months on her with some of the other male animators and just wasn't happy with the results. He felt her character needed a woman's touch. Hal's standards were incredibly high though, and it was definitely a challenge to make him happy. Even so, I looked up to him in many ways and enjoyed working with him very much. On *Monkey Island 2*, I actually only did a minimal amount of animation on the game itself, but did work with Ron Gilbert and Steve Purcell to produce the box art. Ron and Steve were an incredible creative team, along with Tim Schaffer and Dave Grossman. Together, they were a powerhouse of great writing, creativity, and fabulous artwork that really was the core of what made LucasArts such a special place to work. Peter Chan started at the company about a week before me. He was fresh out of the Academy of Art in San Francisco and eager to please. Even with the high standards that had been set before he arrived, in terms of the artwork at the company, he came in and blew everyone's mind with his jaw-droppingly beautiful concept work, and breathed new inspiration into the rest of the background artists at the company.

What process did you go through when animating pixel sprites? Were the frames drawn on paper first?
Because the screen resolution was so minimal and scanners weren't available when I started, we all animated directly in the computer using Deluxe Paint and a mouse. None of us were trained as classical animators, but were instead self-taught while on the job. Even when scanners became available, the vast majority of animators preferred to continue drawing directly into the computer. It wasn't until the resolution increased and other programs became available for animation that doing it this way became obsolete.

How did the development of *Sam & Max Hit the Road* begin?
Steve Purcell, Sean Clark, and Mike Stemmle came up with the overarching idea of a road trip, and then we brainstormed a bunch of ideas of places we thought would be fun for *Sam & Max* to visit. Then we pieced together a story around those places. We storyboarded the entire game on paper first to make sure it hung together cohesively. Once the storyboards were done, we didn't veer from them very much.

Did the large sprites and cartoon-like animation mean that development took longer than previous games?
Not that I remember. We actually implemented the game in the same amount of time as other games at the time – maybe even less.

Were you involved in the decision to remove the verb system in SCUMM and revert to the new advanced icon system instead?
Yes, somewhat. I just remember that we wanted it to be easier and more intuitive to use.

What was it like working on a game that had full speech? What was the casting process like?
I wasn't involved much in the casting; Steve Purcell and the voice department handled that. Except for the full screen sequences, which Steve Purcell and Larry Ahern animated, we didn't have to worry about syncing up the voice to the small on-screen animations for the most part, because of the way they were programmed.

Which parts of *Sam & Max: Hit the Road* are you most proud of?
That's a tough one because there are so many wonderful things about the game. I love that we were able to go crazy with making it as quirky, fun and bizarre as possible – bringing together in one game all the things we love, like the giant yarn ball, the flamethrower, Trixy the giraffe lady, the Elvis impersonator, and the Sasquatch to name just a few. Mike Stemmle's and Sean Clark's familiarity with the material, and the sharp, funny dialogue, brilliantly weaved it all together.

"I love that we were able to go crazy with making it as quirky, fun, and bizarre as possible – bringing together in one game all the things we love, like the giant yarn ball, the flamethrower, Trixy the giraffe lady, the Elvis impersonator, and the Sasquatch to name just a few."

▲ A selection of iconic scenes from *Sam & Max Hit the Road, including* The Office and Snuckey's Diner.

▲ The pair visit the carnival in *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, which includes attractions such as 'Wak-A-Rat' and 'The Hall of Oddities'.

Simon the Sorcerer

Using the Adventure Graphic Operating System (AGOS), Mike Woodroffe headed up a team of just 15 people to make this parody-filled LucasArts-style game. Adventure Soft's game follows the adventures of trainee wizard Simon, and the player uses 12 verbs displayed on screen at all times to interact with the environment. The plot references various fairy tales such as *Rapunzel* and *Jack and the Beanstalk* and the humour is quintessentially British.

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▲ Many of the locations within *Simon the Sorcerer* parody popular fairy tales and fantasy stories. All were hand-drawn on paper, scanned and then digitally coloured.

Simon Woodroffe

Woodroffe created his first game aged six and began his career during his early teens, enlisted by his father, Mike, to assist with the creation of the *Dungeons & Dragons* title *Heroes of the Lance*. Woodroffe eventually rose to the position of designer, working on titles like *Elvira*, *Elvira II* and *WaxWorks*. However, his namesake *Simon the Sorcerer* is perhaps the character he is most closely associated with. Designed by Woodroffe and directed by his father, this 1993 point-and-click classic was created by a tiny team in the UK yet it challenged the very best that LucasArts and Sierra had to offer at the time. He has since held key creative positions at Midway Games, Longtail Studios and Sega, and his current role is studio creative director at Rare.

How did you first get involved in the computer games industry?
I got lucky in the fact that my dad – Mike Woodroffe – ran a company called Adventure International importing adventure games from America; the Scott Adams adventure games, mainly. There were about 30 of those. Then he worked with a guy called Bryan Howarth. He did the *Mysterious Adventures* with him, and games like *Robin of Sherwood* and *Gremlins*, as well as a couple of computer game adaptations of the *Fighting Fantasy* books. So I was exposed to all of this as I was growing up. His company was making a *Dungeons & Dragons*-based game called *Heroes of the Lance*, and he dislocated his shoulder playing cricket. So he needed someone to manipulate the mouse and keyboard for him while he was working, and at some point I think he realised he didn't really need to be there, because it was putting together simple graphic sections and basic level design. It was the start of the summer holiday, and I had nothing else to do for weeks, so I started doing that.

"It made me laugh, and I don't recall laughing at a video game before. I remember, when I saw the mechanic with the insult sword-fighting, I thought, 'Oh that's clever.'"

Later you helped out at your dad's company Horror Soft for a few years, contributing to games like *Elvira* and *Waxworks*, before becoming a full-time games designer on *Simon the Sorcerer*...
Yes, at that point I was still a student and studying for exams, but I ended up designing the combat system for *Elvira* and some of the level design for *Elvira II*. I was a big fan of *Dungeon Master*, and I loved playing paper RPGs, Games Workshop board games and so on, so I thought, "I can design this combat system..." All this was done in my spare time, and in the evenings. By the time we got to *WaxWorks* I ended up designing two of the four scenarios.

Were these games precursors in a way to *Simon the Sorcerer*?
Yes, although the interface was more like *Dungeon Master* or *Eye of the Beholder*; they had that same kind of pseudo first-person view. But it was *Monkey Island* that made us decide to change direction after three horror games. I'd really started getting into writing at that point, and comedy felt like an interesting challenge.

And that's how Adventure Soft, the publisher of *Simon*, came about?
That's right. I remember the conversation... "If we're going to do a comedy game we can't really call ourselves Horror Soft – let's just change it." I think it was the same limited company – it was literally just a name change.

What was it about *The Secret of Monkey Island* that caught your attention and became such a big influence on you?
It was just charming and captivating in a way that I think all great video games have the capability of being. It elicits that kind of sense of wonder when you step into that world, and you feel immersed in the story. And the characters are funny! I think I was just overwhelmed by the charm of it – the charm of the characters and the dialogue. It made me laugh, and I don't recall laughing at a video game before. I remember, when I saw the mechanic with the insult sword-fighting, I thought, "Oh that's clever." I don't think there were more immersive video game worlds at the time because we didn't have the kind of big 3D epics we've got now.

Monkey Island immersed you in this fantastic world filled with all these amazing characters, and you could just have fun and live out that kind of fantasy. Maybe I also liked Guybrush as a character; I think I could relate to him to some degree.

What was your role in *Simon the Sorcerer*'s development?
Back then, I think you'd have called it designer and writer. I wrote the entire script and brought together all the characters from the team into something approaching a coherent whole. I also designed the puzzles and, later on, started using our in-house scripting language to put the game together. Everyone wore a lot of hats in those days.

Alongside *Monkey Island*, what were some of the other influences on the game?
There was certainly a lot of influence from TV shows like *Blackadder*, and obviously *Red Dwarf*, but also *Fawlty Towers* and *Monty Python*; all of that BBC comedy stuff was a big influence on me growing up. I was also a big fan of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*, and we saw the opportunity to make a point-and-click that was funny like *Monkey Island* but set in a fantasy world, like *Discworld*. The truth is we tried to arrange to use the *Discworld* IP at first but weren't successful, so we had no choice but to make up our own.

Was the 'Englishness' and humour a deliberate direction you wanted to go with the game from the start?
Absolutely. I had to write about something I knew, and being 16 I didn't really know very much at all, but I felt I had a decent handle on that particular type of humour. At the time, *Monkey Island*'s humour was subtle and clever. I found that funny, but I found *Blackadder* and *The Young Ones* hilarious, too. That kind of humour is where we needed to go, plus I don't think I could have written the clever, subtle stuff that Ron Gilbert came up with – his jokes were far more elegant. Mine were really just trying to get a cheap laugh! I very much played the Ben Elton card on the whole script really, looking back on it, although I didn't know that at the time.

"At the time, Monkey Island's humour was subtle and clever. I found that funny, but I found Blackadder and The Young Ones hilarious, too. That kind of humour is where we needed to go."

***Simon the Sorcerer* parodies quite a few famous fairy tales. Was this something you enjoyed as a writer?**
Fairy tales gave us a universal starting point that everyone could relate to. They also meant we didn't need to do too much exposition of the characters and the story, because everyone knows them, and then we could do something unexpected with how they actually show up in this version of the world, as opposed to the one you knew. I found that quite amusing at the time, that kind of 'perversion' of fairy tales; those stories survive across cultures and generations for a reason. And it gave us an opportunity to do some gags relatively cheaply, and set ourselves a goal of seeing how we could compete with LucasArts when there were just five of us.

How did you decide which famous fairy stories to include in the game?
I read a whole bunch of that kind of stuff, like the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, but I also had all the Ladybird books when I was growing up, which had beautiful little illustrations... There were some I really wanted to get in but we couldn't, like *The Magic Porridge Pot*, although that always felt a bit weird to me; I never got my head around that one!

▲ A young *Simon the Sorcerer* is transported to another world and is immediately surrounded by Goblins in this animated introduction.

▲ Various scenes from *Simon the Sorcerer*, such as the village 'shoppe' which is run by a two-headed shopkeeper.

Do you think that making Simon an ordinary teenage boy helped with the humour?
Yes, I think our decision was that he couldn't be an older wizard; he would have to be a younger one, so for the people playing the game it's a character they sort of know. And we're taking them into this kind of bizarre fantasy world – you've got to have that relatable aspect to the main character. Looking back, I think Simon was a bit Guybrush Threepwood, a bit Edmund Blackadder, and kind of a bit me!

Whose idea was it to have Chris Barrie from *Red Dwarf* voicing Simon in the CD-ROM version, and how did Chris approach the role?
As a young writer, I typically wrote characters with their voice actors in mind and Simon was written for Chris specifically. I was a huge fan of *Red Dwarf* and Rimmer as a character – and there's definitely something of him in Simon, too. Chris was very patient and professional – for most of us this was very much our first time doing anything like this so he kind of had to be. He riffed brilliantly off the less well-known actors we had doing the other voices.

Did you have to create your own 'SCUMM-style' engine for the game?
Simon was made in a modified version of the same engine as *Personal Nightmare*, *Elvira* and *WaxWorks*: the AGOS engine. It stands for 'Adventure Game Operating System'.

"One thing we did do, which I'm not sure was commonplace, is painting and scanning some of the backgrounds. We knew we could scan images, and we had already worked with some brilliant painters."

***Simon the Sorcerer*'s artwork was some of the most charming of any of the point-and-click adventures of the '90s. How involved were you in the creation of the pixel art style?**
That was entirely the product of our art team and the limitations of the technology available to us at the time. One thing we did

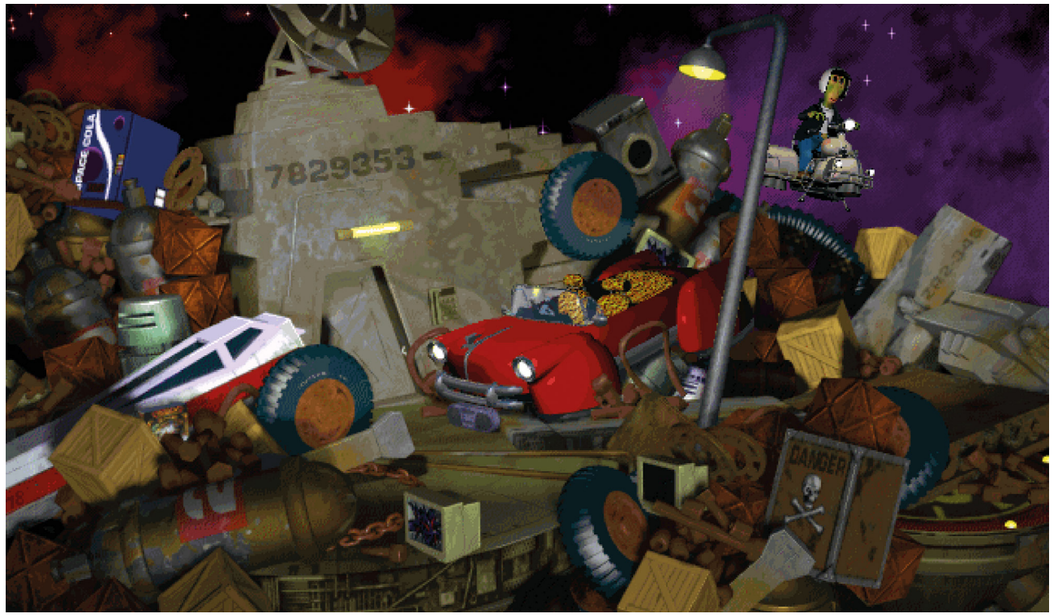
▲ As with the first game, *Simon the Sorcerer II: The Lion, the Wizard and the Wardrobe* makes many references to classic fantasy literature.

do, which I'm not sure was commonplace, was painting and scanning some of the backgrounds. We knew we could scan images, and we had already worked with some brilliant painters. The lead artist was Paul Drummond, and he did most of the art style and the prettiest locations as far as I recall. I actually think you can spot the ones he painted and scanned, versus the ones that were completely created on the computer. Kevin Preston did all the character art and animation, which was all done by hand. As I remember, he'd come up with a character, and say, "How can we use it?" And I'd say, "I think we can thread it in somewhere." You can find bits of the puzzles that seem really irrational and weird, and they're usually the ones where we had to glue a couple of things together that didn't really fit. Fortunately, because it was a comedy, we kind of got away with it, but I'd like to pretend the whole thing was laid out in advance! For *Simon II*, we did that. We had more people, more time, and more potential to actually design things a bit better, but for the first one it was very much a question of steering the train as it went along and trying to write characters to catch up with the situation as it was evolving.

"I had hoped we could get close to the acclaim that Monkey Island *had received but I never thought we would get as close as we did with just the five of us working in three locations."*

What was your reaction to the excellent reception that *Simon the Sorcerer* received?
Surprise and delight. I'd hoped we could get close to the acclaim that *Monkey Island* had received but I never thought we'd get as close as we did with just the five of us working in three locations. I was happy people seemed to love the world we had created and found the humour to their liking – but I'm still convinced it was mostly down to luck.

When did you decide to create a sequel?
We effectively ran from the end of one *Simon* game into the start of another. We had a lot of characters and jokes we couldn't fit into the first one. Technology had moved forward a bit too, and there was a desire from the whole team to up our game both in terms of scope and quality. I really wanted to do something bigger, more sprawling and epic,



▲ 3D adventure *The Feeble Files (Floyd* in certain regions*)* used advanced Silicon Graphics hardware to render the characters and backgrounds.

▲ As the title suggests, *Simon the Sorcerer 3D* ditched its 2D roots in favour of a fully three-dimensional world.

SIMON WOODROFFE INTERVIEW

with a wider range of characters. As soon as the first reviews were in and the orders kept coming we knew we had to capitalise on our success and continue telling Simon's story.

Can you tell us about the creation of *Simon the Sorcerer II*?
Our team got a little bigger – we had two more artists – but other than that, the same team went on to do the second game pretty much without a pause. I remember we were desperate to have scrolling locations. I don't know why, but it just seemed cool at the time. When *Monkey Island 2* came out after the first *Simon*, the graphics were better, the animations were better, the locations were scrolling, the scripts were better… They really raised the bar. And we had a bit more money, so we wanted to see if we could possibly compete. The whole thing flowed a lot more easily, and we were able to make a bigger game in a pretty short period of time, around nine months.

"The approach we took was the same approach Donkey Kong Country *took on the Super Nintendo, using rendered 3D characters converted into flat 2D sprites. But the learning curve to actually get back up to any kind of production volume was immense."*

And with *Simon the Sorcerer II*, you moved on from fairy tales to sending up fantasy literature, like *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Chronicles of Narnia*…
The subtitle 'The Lion, the Wizard and the Wardrobe' was the first thing we came up with because we had a wardrobe anyway – and I remember thinking, "Oh shit… We've got this cool little subtitle but we don't have a lion!" So, somewhere between Act III and IV there's a bit where Simon's riding along on a lion for no reason, which I actually found quite funny at the time – like it would be obvious that we came up with the subtitle before making the game and we had no way of stuffing a lion in there! So the influence shifted somewhat to parodying more famous fantasy novels – although Gollum was sort of in the first *Simon*, and a *Lord of the Rings* hobbit was in there too, as a parody of that fantasy trope. We had more of our own characters in *Simon II*, and fewer taken from fairy tales, although there's a bunch of washerwomen who are effectively from a *Monty Python* sketch!

After this game you decided to move in another direction, satirising science fiction and space-themed TV shows with *The Feeble Files*. Why did you decide to create a completely new point-and-click adventure, rather than make another sequel to the successful *Simon the Sorcerer* series?
We wanted to take a break from it, and do something a bit different. As a writer, I was kind of fed up of Simon by then – I felt I'd said all what I wanted to say about that character. LucasArts had moved onto other things after *Monkey Island 2*, and I think *Full Throttle* was around at the time. And I wanted to do something a bit subtler, a bit darker, and a bit more mature. So I probably took one of the worst business decisions we've ever made, which was to not make *Simon the Sorcerer 3*. For *Feeble Files*, we wanted to use Silicon Graphics [computer workstations] to produce all the characters and backgrounds, and invested a lot of money in that, along with all the training for our staff. The approach we took was the same approach *Donkey Kong Country* took on the Super Nintendo, using rendered 3D characters converted into flat 2D sprites. But the learning curve to actually get back up to any kind of production volume was immense. As a writer I'm prouder of it, I think, because I prefer the characters and the story, but as a game it's obviously nowhere near as fun and well-regarded as the *Simon* games.

For *The Feeble Files*, you employed another *Red Dwarf* actor, Robert Llewellyn, who played Kryten in the TV series. Was the game inspired by similar sci-fi shows, and did you have him in mind when writing the main character too?
Yes, *Blake's 7* was a big influence on that game, as I really liked the space-opera vibe of that show. I was obviously also influenced by *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, along with *1984* by George Orwell and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, both of which I'd just read at the time. I was a bit older then, about 19 or 20, so I wanted to expand my horizons a bit as a writer. I had Robert in mind for the main protagonist, Feeble, because I thought he had the perfect voice for the character. He was very easy to work with, and he was fascinated by the technology. I think he was interested in doing a *Red Dwarf* point-and-click adventure; I guess that's why he got involved. He was super easy to work with, and a really fun guy to hang around with as well. I remember going to the pub with him as I could have a drink by then, so that must tell you roughly how old I was!

***Simon the Sorcerer 3D* followed *Feeble Files*, which obviously moved away from the traditional pixel art of the previous point-and-click adventures. What made you go fully 3D in terms of the graphics?**
Game publishers, basically. We were told that 2D was dead, and that we had no hope of getting funding if we didn't go 3D. We pitched a 2D version of *Simon 3* to dozens of companies and kept getting the same feedback, so we made a decision to go for it, against our instincts, just to survive. We'd invested a lot of money in *The Feeble Files*, which was not a commercial success, and the company needed external funding again, so it was either that or there would have been no *Simon 3* at all. We had only needed to do about ten per cent of the sales of the first *Simon* to do all right, but it did feebly badly. I think we printed 250,000 copies, and something like half of them got returned. So that was our last *Simon* game.

2018 will be the 25th anniversary of the first *Simon the Sorcerer*. Do you miss the character at all, and would you ever consider making another *Simon* point-and-click adventure?
I think I'd naturally like to go back to writing. Whether it would surface in the form of a point-and-click adventure, or something else, I don't know, but I'd want to tell stories and have characters that were interesting and fun to interact with, so maybe that's the right format for it. For me, *Simon II* is where I kind of checked out. I've got the whole design of the 'real' *Simon 3* knocking around somewhere. We planned to do it as a 2D game with a cartoon aesthetic, like *Monkey Island 3*. We had most of the 2D art drawn for it as well. It'll probably never get made, unfortunately. I do still write, but nowadays mostly just for fun. I've got a lot of kids, and I like to make up stories for them. In fact, we have the 25th anniversary edition of *Simon the Sorcerer* coming to iPhone soon, and the three of them had to play through it to test it!

Space Quest V: The Next Mutation

By the fifth game, Sierra knew what fans wanted from the *Space Quest* series: plot-driven gameplay, sci-fi pastiche and a multitude of amusing ways to kill the main character. Larger character sprites draw attention to the graphics, which are presented in a 1950s retrofuturistic B movie style. The plot references many sci-fi movies and TV shows from the time, such as *Star Trek*, *The Fly* and *Aliens*. Roger even adopts a facehugger called Spike during his adventure!

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers

Unlike other Sierra titles, Jane Jensen's *Gabriel Knight* has a realistic setting and deals with mature themes such as horror and murder. While there are some inventory-based puzzles, there's a greater focus on detective work; interrogation and hunting for evidence are required skills in this world of secret societies and murderous cults. The CD-ROM release includes full voice acting from Hollywood stars, including Tim Curry (Gabriel Knight) and Mark Hamill (Detective Franklin Mosely) and features an animated intro sequence.

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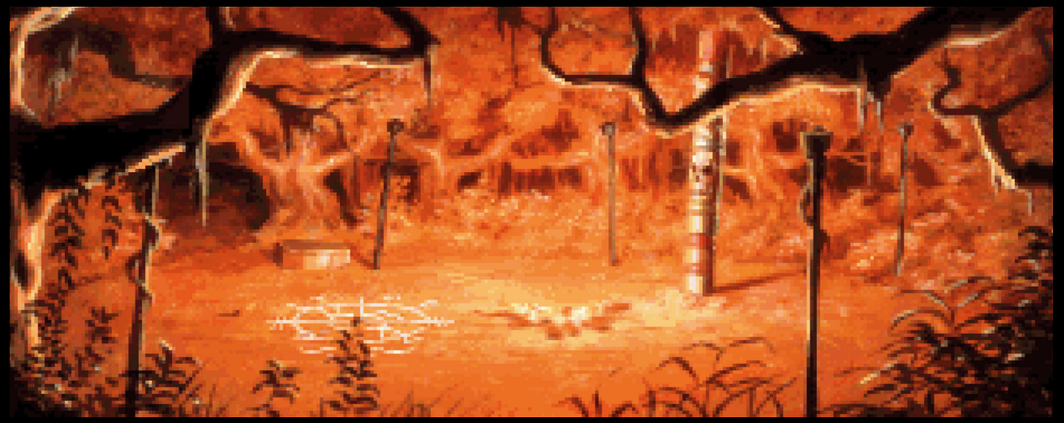

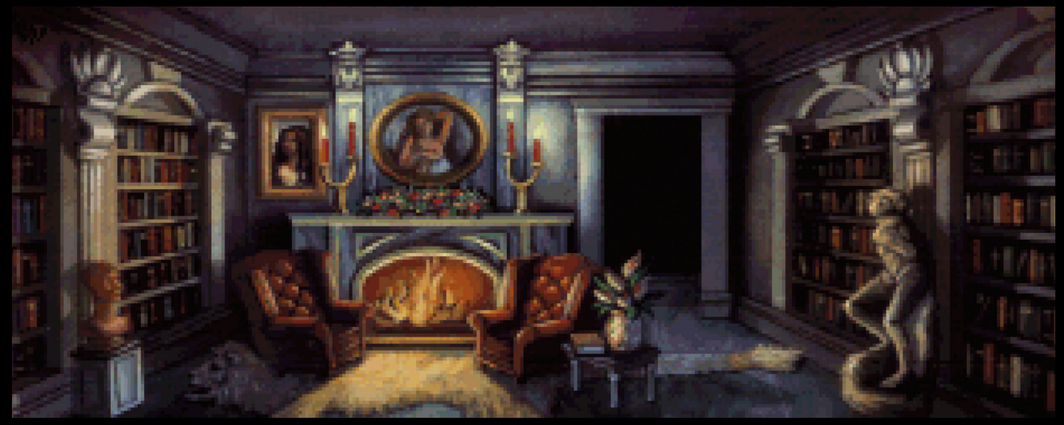

▲ All the backgrounds in *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* were first sketched on paper before being digitised.

Jane Jensen

Jane Jensen joined Sierra On-Line in the early '90s, and contributed to the *Police Quest* and *King's Quest* franchises before being given her first lead designer role on 1993's *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers*. With its mature tone and supernatural vibe, the game was hailed as an instant classic, turning Jensen into one of the point-and-click genre's leading talents. Sequels followed, but at the turn of the millennium she parted company with Sierra and founded Oberon Media. In 2012 she established Pinkerton Road with her husband, Richard Holmes, who served as composer on *Gabriel Knight*. The company released *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers 20th Anniversary Edition* in 2014. As well as designing video games, Jensen is an award-winning writer of fiction.

Were you interested in computers from a young age?
No. I was born in 1963 so there weren't personal computers around then; I didn't get interested in it until college in 1980. I took a Computer Science class and loved it – I loved the logic of programming. I ended up majoring in Computer Science. At that time, though, we all worked on mainframes.

How did you first come to work at Sierra On-Line?
I got my first personal computer around 1988 and bought a bunch of Sierra's games. I became obsessed with them. At that time I was working as a software engineer for Hewlett-Packard, but I really wanted to write novels. Computer games seemed like the perfect blend. I sent them a résumé and a story, and was hired to work in their writers' block.

Were you a fan of previous point-and click adventure games by Sierra and LucasArts?
Yes, definitely.

Your first major project was *Police Quest III: The Kindred*. What was your role in the development?
I was assigned to work with the designer, Jim Walls, who wasn't really a writer. His background was that he'd been a cop. So I wrote dialogue for the game, the booklet that shipped with the game, and helped with some story development.

Do you have any idea why Jim left the series after *Police Quest III*?
He was a good guy, easy to work with – fairly private as I recall. We didn't really become close. I have no idea why he left Sierra; after that game we didn't have any contact. But I didn't get the feeling he loved games, or that designing was a passion of his.

This was followed by a major role in the development of *King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow*. Were you a fan of the previous *King's Quest* games in the series?
Yes, the first game I ever played was *King's Quest IV*. I was a big fan.

What was the experience like, working on a game from concept to finish?
That was an interesting project because I worked with Roberta Williams. We spent a few weeks at her house on the lake with a huge pad of paper just sketching out ideas for the story. She had definite ideas of what *King's Quest* was and wasn't, and she reined in my tendency for drama and tragedy! It was a great experience. During the project, she'd get builds and write up long lists of very detailed notes. So I learned a lot from watching her operate as lead designer. After the design was set, I was in-house working with the team and wrote the dialogue, which Roberta reviewed and approved.

Were you happy with the end result?
Yes, I think it's a great game; probably some of my best comedic writing in gaming.

You then got the opportunity to work on your own game with an original concept. Can you tell us how the idea for *Gabriel Knight* came about?
I've always been interested in the paranormal. I read tons of horror novels in high school, lots of Stephen King, John Saul, Dean Koontz, and Anne Rice. I wanted to do something that had paranormal elements to it but was also investigative, like a mystery, because the process of investigation makes for good puzzles. I went through various options but finally settled on New Orleans and voodoo, and that lead to the whole backstory of the 'Schattenjagers', or witch hunters.

"It was remarkable how much freedom we had. I was creative director on that game as well as designer, so I had final say. It's amazing that Sierra gave us the leeway they did on the project."

Was the concept something that Ken and Roberta were excited about from the beginning, and was there any concern about creating such a dark adventure?
No, Ken wasn't excited about it. He preferred comedy and he didn't get the interest in darker stuff. At that time, no one was doing horror at all. It was all comedy, like *Leisure Suit Larry* and *Monkey Island*. But, to his credit, he let me do it.

Is Gabriel based on anyone?
No. I suppose I was inspired by romances I'd read; I always like a good rogue. Gabriel is definitely a rogue.

"I always like a good rogue. Gabriel is definitely a rogue."

It featured Hollywood voice acting from stars such as Tim Curry and Mark Hamill. What was this experience like?
Sierra had just started doing voice-overs. I think the first big game was *King's Quest VI* with Robbie Benson [the voice of the Beast in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*]. The director they worked for on that, Stu Rosen, was used for *Gabriel Knight* as well. He did a ton of voice-over work in L.A. so he knew all the actors. He would suggest people for roles and then tape auditions, and I'd listen to the tapes. We had a hard time casting Gabriel because he had to be sexy, arrogant, and a smartass – but still really appealing and likeable. Tim Curry was Stu's suggestion and he was absolutely brilliant.

Both of Tim and Mark had done voice work in cartoons, but did they approach video game work differently? Did they provide any feedback or ideas?
By the time the actors came in, we'd have a humongous script and it's just line, line, line. So, no, they really didn't offer suggestions. Once in a while they'd have trouble with a line and I was fine with them, or Stu, rewording it so it felt more natural. But really, most of the time it went so fast, there was no time for rewriting. I was at the studio for the first few weeks of recording but it went on well past that point.

Did you work with pixel artists to create the overall look of the environments?
Yes, typically you write a 'scene spec', which details everything that ever happens in a location, inventory items picked up, props and so on, as well as give a basic description of mood and layout. But then the artists do sketches and add their vision to it. Sketches are approved before final art is done.

Were you given creative freedom to make *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* exactly how you wanted it to be?
Yes. It was remarkable how much freedom we had. I was creative director on that game as well as designer, so I had final say. It's amazing that Sierra gave us the leeway they did on the project. Other than issues of not going over budget, they were really hands-off. And the studio head, Mark Brill, loved the project and was very supportive of it. It was a fantastic creative environment.

The sequel, *The Beast Within: A Gabriel Knight Mystery*, was very technically advanced and featured a lot of FMV footage. Why did you choose this approach over 2D or 3D visuals?
That was Sierra's decision; they were always trying to stay cutting edge with technology. If you're going to invest a million in a game, you don't want to be considered old-school before you even ship. At that time, FMV was the hot new thing.

Did you enjoy the challenge of using real actors instead of animated sprites?
I really did. It was a treat to work with real actors. I would have loved it if gaming had continued in that direction – but sadly, it didn't.

***Gabriel Knight 3: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned* then moved into 3D. What kind of challenges did this bring to the table, and did your previous experiences with 2D and video help in any way?**
What was new was the ability to move the camera, so I worked on a number of puzzles that required you to look around and under things. And it also influenced a big landscape puzzle in the game, Le Serpent Rouge. I missed the live actors, but it was fun working with voice-over actors again.

Looking back, which parts of the *Gabriel Knight* games are you most proud of?
I think that the teams had so much passion and creativity around those games. I don't think I will ever experience anything like that kind of teamwork again. You can feel that passion in the games, and I think that's why they've lasted.

Does it surprise you that there's still interest in the old point-and-click adventures?
No. I certainly have nostalgia for old games and books and movies I loved in the '70s and '80s, so I can understand nostalgia for the games people played growing up. I think what's sadder is that there really aren't more of these games going on now.

Do you think we'll ever see a brand-new *Gabriel Knight* adventure?
I don't think so. Activision owns the license and recently attempted to revive the older Sierra titles in *King's Quest* – I don't think it earned them the kind of return their shooters do. So I doubt they will do anything with it. Perhaps someday someone will buy those older licenses and there'll be another chance for them to come back.

Scenes from the original *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* (left) and the *20th Anniversary Edition* from 2014 (right).

1994

Beneath a Steel Sky
Using a modified version of Revolution's Virtual Theatre system, this *Blade Runner*-inspired science fiction point-and-click is awash with cyberpunk influences. Featuring more than 100 rich environments designed by celebrated comic book artist Dave Gibbons. A now much sought-after exclusive Dave Gibbons comic was included with the original big box release, which served as an introduction to the game.

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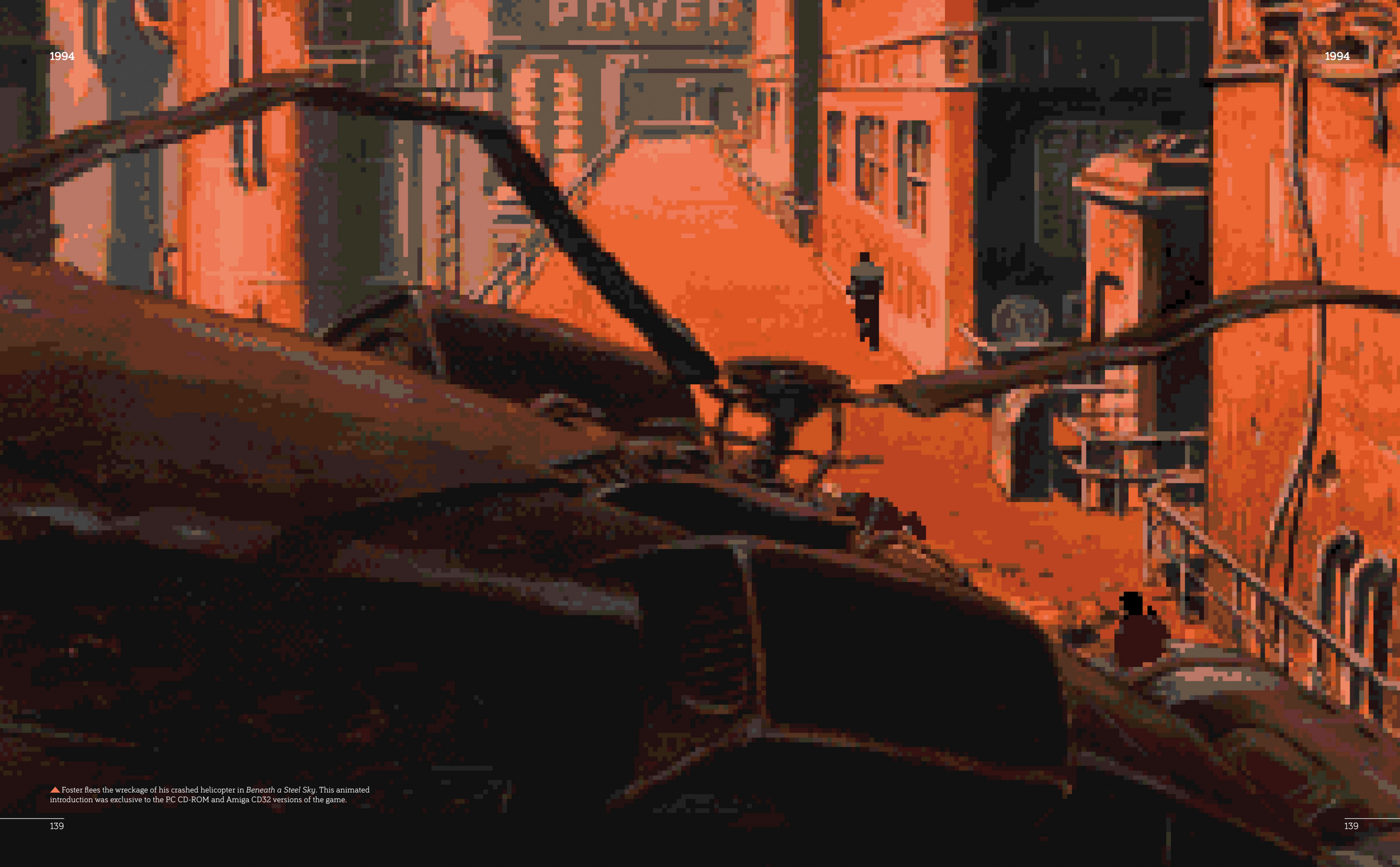
1994



▲ Foster flees the wreckage of his crashed helicopter in *Beneath a Steel Sky*. This animated introduction was exclusive to the PC CD-ROM and Amiga CD32 versions of the game.

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▲ A series of stills taken from the comic book-inspired animated introduction in *Beneath a Steel Sky*. Each image was hand-drawn by Dave Gibbons and then digitised in 256 colours.

Dave Gibbons

For ardent comic fans, Dave Gibbons will surely need no introduction. He has worked with some of the biggest brands in the business, including *Dan Dare*, *Superman*, *Judge Dredd*, *Doctor Who*, *Rogue Trooper* and many more besides, and is the co-creator of the iconic miniseries *Watchmen* alongside the legendary Alan Moore. His art was introduced to a new generation of fans with the 1994 point-and-click adventure *Beneath a Steel Sky*.

As an established and well-known comic book artist, what made you want to work in the games industry?
I was actually approached by Charles Cecil. He and some of the people around him had seen what I'd done with *Watchmen*, which was enjoying what would be its first flush of success at the time. They saw that I knew how to build the world and design characters and environments, and they thought that it might be an interesting thing to get me on board. I was very keen, because I've always liked the sort of design and the collaborative aspects of working in comics, and it became clear to me that there was a similar kind of way of working in games. Shortly after that, Charles left and set up Revolution Games. They did *Lure of the Temptress* which was quite successful, and Virgin Games got behind them to develop a dystopian science fiction game, which was right up my street. I was employed by Virgin and got royalties as well, which was the sort of deal that I'd had on comics, and I found Charles and his team great fun to work with. Virgin treated me very well financially and it was a really enjoyable experience.

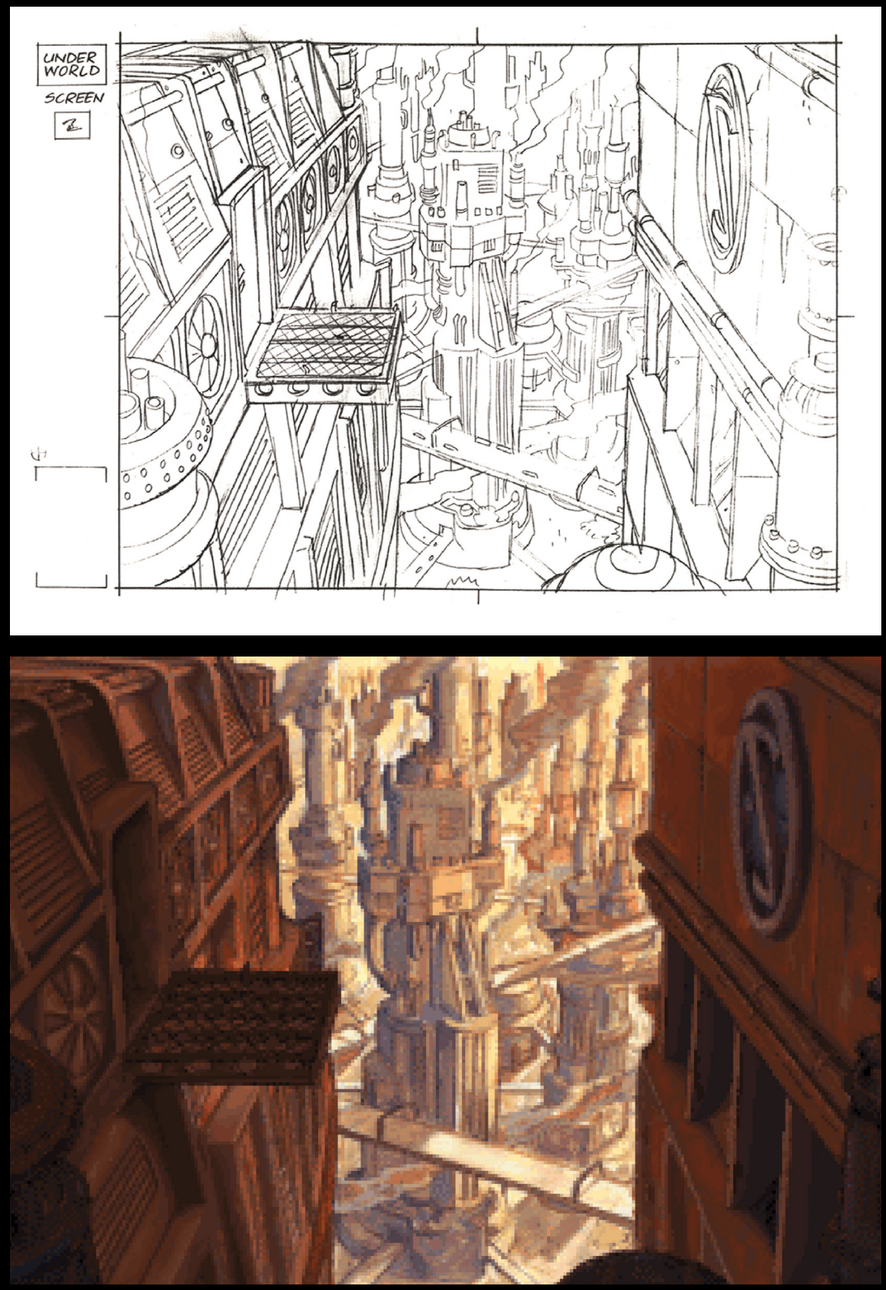
Had you been interested in computers prior to this, or video games in general?
I remember buying one of the very, very first Amstrad computers, like a lot of people in the early-to-mid '80s. I didn't really know what I was going to do with it; there was a vague idea that I might do household accounts or catalogue my collection or something like that. But my son – who was born in 1979 – soon became the person who was on the computer the most. With the old Amstrads, you used to load the games on cassette tapes and they took forever. I remember one called *Harrier Attack*, which was based on the Falklands War, but the Harrier plane was virtually an L-shaped block of pixels, and the bombs were just like individual pixels which seemed to fall out of the bottom of this L-shaped thing. But it was quite absorbing and my son certainly got a lot of pleasure out of it. The games slowly got more sophisticated; there were platform games and adventure games; and, around that time, someone gave us one of the very first Atari consoles as well. I remember playing a *Superman* game on there, which was a very crude collection of pixels. But you used your imagination and got into it. A little further down the line we upgraded to an Amiga, and I got to know a few people in games journalism by then because *Watchmen* had been picked up on. I used to go up to London and pop into the publishers and they'd give me big sack full of games that they'd reviewed. I remember one Christmas literally coming home like Father Christmas with a huge mailing sack full of assorted games that I gave to my son. I've therefore become quite familiar with games, although not from playing them much myself, but from seeing what my son liked and – through his eyes – getting to know the way that the various games worked. In the very early '90s I took the plunge and invested in an Apple system and I've used a computer nearly every day since, not really to play games on, but to write, draw and paint on.

How did the concept for *Beneath a Steel Sky* come about? What was your role in the game's creation?
Revolution wanted to do this dystopian science fiction game, and they presented it to me and we kicked the idea around and I came up with some story ideas and some design. They wanted me to be involved in all parts of it, so what I ended up doing was giving them story notes and discussing it with them.

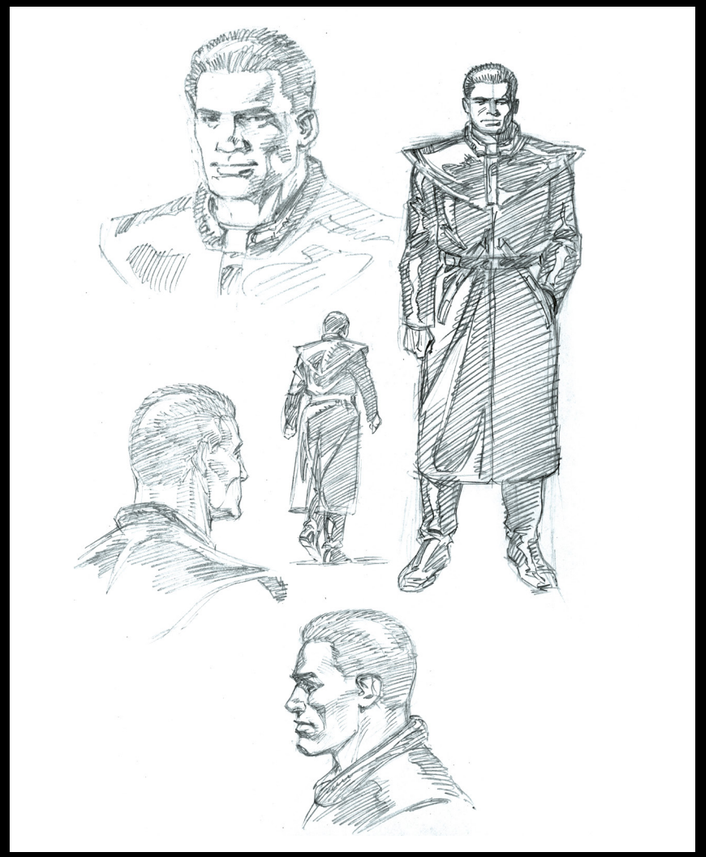
What process did you use for creating the graphics?
I'd draw the backgrounds – which were kind of roughed-out storyboards almost – and I'd send them to the guys at Revolution, and they'd send them back and I'd do a finished, very clean, very sharp, single-line pencil drawing. They then went to an animation background artist who I discovered, a guy called Les Pace, who painted over them. I can still remember seeing the very first one of those painted backgrounds on a big screen – it was a sort of 20-inch Apple CRT monitor at Virgin Games – and just being blown away by how luminous everything looked compared to the fairly flat paper artwork. I also designed some of the sprites, and I did that using Deluxe Paint on the Amiga, one pixel at a time, with a bit of a guidance from Revolution's pixel artist – who actually did all the animation on the sprites – who gave me a few tips on best working practice. I found that really interesting; I was amazed by what you could do with very simple arrangements of pixels and a clever choice of colour and contrast. I also did a comic book which was the backstory to the game, so you could learn about how things came to be. It segued into an animation on the screen, and then straight into the gameplay, and that seemed to work quite well.

The inclusion of an actual comic with the game was a great idea – was this fun to produce?
Yes, because, after doing these sort of rather constrained screen layouts and blocky sprites, I was able to use all my skills and do a complete comic. I wrote the script and drew the whole story out, did the lettering on it, and I was really quite proud of the way I managed to condense a lot of action and a lot of background into it. It was coloured by a friend of mine in Canada called Lovern Kindzierski. That was great fun to produce.

DAVE GIBBONS INTERVIEW



▲ Pencil sketch of the exterior of the recycling plant in *Beneath a Steel Sky*, and the final pixelled scene from the game.



▲ Concept pencil sketches of the main character, Foster, in *Beneath a Steel Sky*.

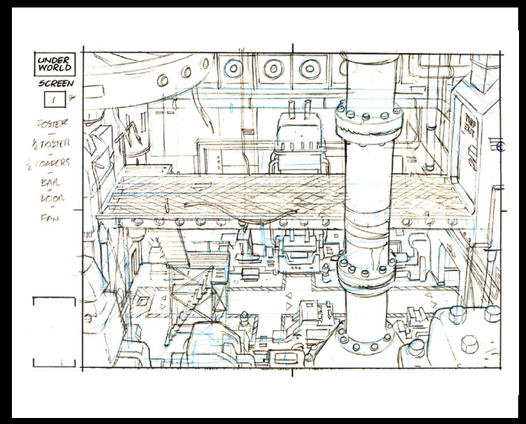
"I can still remember seeing the very first one of those painted backgrounds on a big screen – it was a sort of 20-inch Apple CRT monitor at Virgin Games – and just being blown away by how luminous everything looked compared to the fairly flat paper artwork."

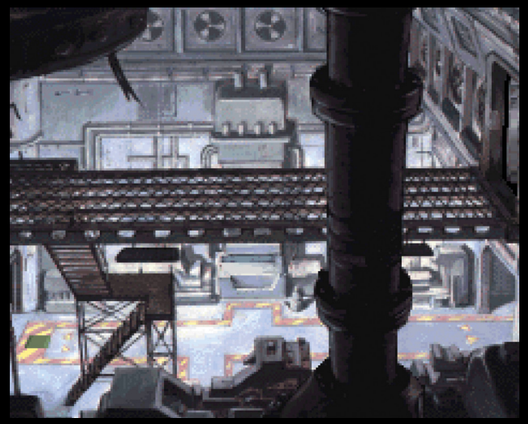
Were you happy with how your art looked on the computer screen?
I was, given that the animation was fairly crude. Despite having seen my stuff appear on movie screens and in more sophisticated games, there's still a huge thrill to seeing something that you've created as a still drawing, a still piece of artwork, move around and seem to have a life of its own. I was very happy with the transformation.

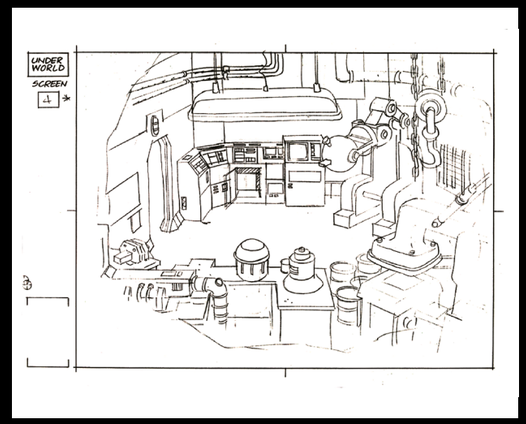
What challenges did you come up against during development?
The screens that I drew had to fulfil certain purposes, so you were constrained with the design a bit and how things could be situated and how big they could be, and you had to try and 'fake' the idea of perspective because you couldn't actually make the sprites get smaller as they went off into the distance. You had to cheat things a bit with different layers of background. But I've always enjoyed a challenge, and I think when you're most challenged and when you have the most restrictions, that's sometimes when you get the greatest creative buzz.

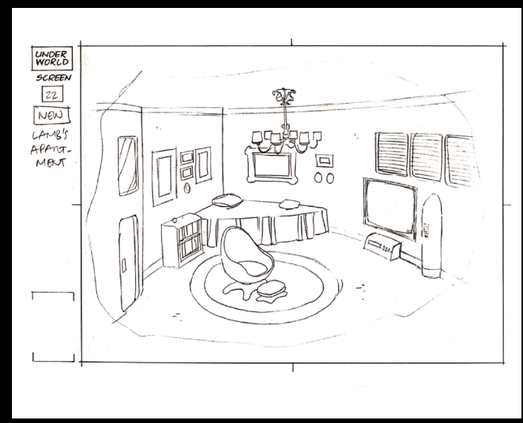
What parts are you most proud of?
I don't know that I could particularly single anything out. I would have to say that it clearly is a very well-written game, and it seems to be one of the classics in that respect, but I really can't take any credit for that area at all. It's just great that my artwork and all the effort I put into it wasn't wasted on something that wasn't really very good. I suppose that's the thing that gave me most pride.

Did you go on to work on any other computer games after *Beneath a Steel Sky*?
Not a huge number. I had a little bit of input into the *Watchmen* computer game, really just defining the style of the cutscenes, but I didn't have any input into the gameplay or the story. More recently I was also ever-so-slightly involved with *No Man's Sky*. A friend of mine was behind the sound on that, and I went down to see him at Hello Games' office and really loved what they were doing with the game – it seemed such a wonderful, huge, expansive concept. They were huge comic fans, and we did a little comic book that went in with the special edition, where I wrote the story set in their universe, and a friend of mine, Angus McKay, did the artwork digitally for it. I also did some illustrations for a text story in the book, written by James Swallow, who is a very good science fiction and adventure writer. I can't give too much away, but Charles Cecil and I are working on another game at the moment which again is a lot of fun, particularly now we're using today's state-of-the-art technology and we're able to send stuff backwards and forwards digitally, and I'm able to use the full arsenal of digital effects. I should also mention that I did little bits of artwork for some of Charles's other games when they were ported across to the iPhone and Android platforms. I did some talking heads, which appear on those screens to convey information, and we did another couple of little comic books to be packaged with those.









▲ Further pencil sketches of various scenes in *Beneath a Steel Sky*, and the final pixelled scenes from the game.

1994

Roberta Williams' King's Quest VII: The Princeless Bride

A shift to the SCI2.1 engine meant higher resolution 640×480 graphics were possible. To take advantage of this, the developers turned to traditional animation by Walt Disney Pictures and Don Bluth for inspiration. Echoing their traditional techniques, every character sprite was pencil-drawn on paper and then scanned in. These were then edited and coloured digitally. As a result, this visually stunning sequel contains more than five times more frames of animation than previous *King's Quest* games. As a consequence, the storyline had to be made shorter to fit all the graphics onto a single CD-ROM.

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1994

DreamWeb

Distinct not just for its top-down viewpoint, this is a gritty, mature game filled with explicit violence and full-frontal nudity. Each location in the game's dystopian city takes only a small portion of the screen and limited inventory space. Despite its great looks and unique take on the genre, the ability to pick up too many items that serve no purpose on your progress makes for quite frustrating gameplay at times.

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Neil Dodwell

Neil Dodwell began his career in the early '80s, programming games for Amstrad home computers before shifting his attention to consoles, including the Sega Master System and Nintendo Game Boy. He founded Creative Reality with David Dew and Jas Austin in the mid-1980s, and the studio's 1994 point-and-click adventure *DreamWeb* proved to be a pivotal point in his career. This PC and Amiga release was unique in its approach to mature themes, such as nudity and gore, but gained a legion of fans for other reasons – namely its detailed 2D visuals, engaging cyberpunk storyline and atmospheric music. Since serving as director on *DreamWeb*, Dodwell has contributed to titles such as *Call of Duty: Strike Team*, *Grand Theft Auto V*, *L.A. Noire* and *Rockstar Presents Table Tennis*.

How did the concept for *DreamWeb* come about?
I think it was just one of many ideas we'd been talking about doing after we finished *Myth* on the Spectrum. I remember getting a VGA card for a PC we had, and feeling that we really wanted to do something for the PC after seeing some tests that David Dew [Creative Reality co-founder] did in Deluxe Paint. Not only did we have all those colours to play with, but seeing it on a VGA monitor, everything was so clear.

Was there a core inspiration for the overall story and approach?
Obviously style-wise, we blatantly ripped off *Blade Runner*. As far as the story goes, I think we had a load of bits – like Ryan [the lead character] being a barman, that he'd been having nightmares and went on a killing spree. It was our agent, Jacqui Lyons, who came up with the idea of using the Seven Deadly Sins to tie everything together. I think the name for the game probably came off a big list of ideas we'd brainstormed and came before the story.

What were your roles in the development?
I programmed the game, David Dew did the graphics, and between us we both designed the game. We wrote the puzzles and dialogue between us but I don't think we ever really enjoyed doing it; getting the design down was like pulling teeth.

Was it intentional to create a twist on the standard point-and-click adventure games that were around at the time?
We loved the Sierra and LucasArts point-and-click adventures, and we definitely wanted to do something like that but a lot darker and more gritty. Initially, we wanted some sort of real-time combat, but after experimenting with that we came up with the quick time event-style combat. This seemed to fit into the adventure/inventory interface that we'd created.

Why did you opt for the top-down view?
This was decided very early on, although I'm not sure where it came from. Even the earliest of demos we made had a top-down view, although originally it was going to scroll around a large map but I couldn't get that working on all video cards at the time, so we abandoned that idea.

When designing *DreamWeb*, were you afraid of going so dark that you were you at risk of limiting your audience?
I honestly don't think we thought about an audience. We basically wrote a game that we wanted to play, so we just did that. There was no one telling us what we could and couldn't do during most of the development, so we just put in what we liked. We knew we wanted to create something adult.

"Obviously style-wise, we blatantly ripped off Blade Runner. *As far as the story goes, I think we had a load of bits – like Ryan being a barman, that he'd been having nightmares and went on a killing spree."*

The *Diary of a Madman* booklet that came with the game was a dark, disturbing and thoroughly gripping read. Looking back, the diary must have been quite an investment of time and money, on top of what was already a beautifully detailed game. Why did you want to include it?
Towards the end of development our agent, Jacqui Lyons, introduced us to an author called Stephen Marley. If we hadn't already recorded the audio for the game I think he'd have re-written all the dialogue, and he thought the story really didn't make much sense. In order to tie everything together and give some reason for Ryan's actions – and to make everything work as a whole – he came up with the idea of the diary. It also worked as a crude form of copy protection, as it had some clues required to complete the game in it. The whole thing was written and the art produced for it right as development came to a close, so it's amazing it seems such an integral part of the game now.

Little graphical touches – such as the ceiling fans – created a magical sense of space. How much work went into creating these all-important little touches?
I ended up writing a whole bespoke editor for Dave to put together the backgrounds as tiles, animations and layering of graphics. We could also set up all the movement, object descriptions and little cutscene sequences. I probably put as much work into that as I did into the game itself. You could position elements in all three dimensions, so it was easy to create that sense of depth. We always intended to produce more games using that engine – including a Lovecraft-based game which we had a demo for – but by the time we finished *DreamWeb* things had moved on a lot, graphically.

What was your process for creating the in-game art? Did you start sketching on paper or draw directly into the computer?
Dave isn't a paper artist at all, so everything was done straight into the game editor with some of the sequences requiring hundreds of frames of animation. The editor allowed the multi-frame animation of multiple objects to be laid out into the locations to create quite long animation sequences.

Unlike classic adventure games, *DreamWeb* doesn't make much use of dialogue trees. Why is this?
There is actually some branching dialogue in there, although it's a feature we didn't use much. The main reason is that we hated writing the dialogue, so we did the minimum we could for it. It's a bit odd to bash out a load of text for a game and then suddenly find yourself in a recording studio with actors. If we'd have known Stephen Marley at that time, we'd have gotten him to script it.

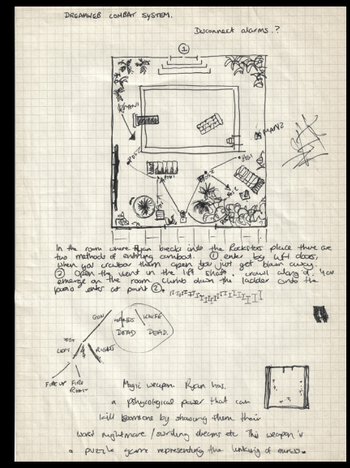
Can you tell us how the game's soundtrack was created, and what kind of atmosphere you were aiming for?
We knew we wanted something moody and atmospheric and two friends of ours [Matt Seldon and Steve Boynton] had some synths, so they offered to do the music. Looking back, I don't think we realised how important it was at the time, but we got lucky with getting the right feel. There was a lot of input from us (and Dave in particular) but, like everything else about the game, *Blade Runner* was something of an influence.

The game was incredibly detailed; you could literally pick up and carry around any and every object you found, no matter how small. This led to lots of objects that were useless to your progress. With hindsight, would you have changed that?
I don't know; it seems silly, but we really liked the idea. We didn't want the player to know which objects they could and couldn't use – we didn't want the solution to a puzzle to be the only thing you could pick up in a room. You really had to be selective about what you collected and manage your inventory. We went overboard with most stuff, but the idea of picking up a pea off the floor that was one pixel in size amused us! We even put a pea into another game we did, *Martian Gothic*. There was a game called *Déjà Vu* for the Amiga, where you could squish all the small items together to make more room in your inventory, and we really liked that.

Can you talk about the controversy around the game and sexual nature of certain scenes? How aware of the controversy were you at the time?
I don't think we really thought much about the violence and nudity until it came to releasing the game, when our publisher, Empire Interactive, made us make a few changes for different markets. We just put whatever was needed for the story into the game. I think the bit shooting the rockstar in bed did make us question if we'd gone too far, but we still kept it in! In the end some markets had nudity covered completely, some had blood changed to green, and some had partial nudity.

Were you pleased with how *DreamWeb* was received by the gaming press?
I think most of the reviews were fair. They mostly picked up on how short the game was, and how tricky it was to sift through all the objects you could examine. The whole thing was a monumental struggle for us to get finished – there were only the two of us making the game and we'd swapped publisher halfway through, as well as having to write other games in the middle of it all to bring money in. I'm still amazed we actually got to the end of it, so by then we didn't really care how well it was received.

Would you ever consider revisiting *DreamWeb* and doing a sequel?
Absolutely – does anyone want to fund it?



▲ Examples of original design documents and sprite designs for *DreamWeb*.

NEIL DODWELL INTERVIEW

1994

Universe
Core Design's second point-and -click game was originally intended as a sequel to *Curse of Enchantia*. It uses a similar interface, but the improved engine now supports text and dialogue. The game features a main character called Boris Verne, who is actually a rotoscoped version of the artist, Rolf Mohr. *Universe* also includes an impressive Super-Pre-Adjusted-Colour system, which enables the Amiga 500 to display 256 colours at once. The end result is some beautifully rendered backgrounds that work perfectly with the space opera theme.

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1995

Discworld
Although several companies sought permission to turn Terry Pratchett's novels into point-and-click adventures, it was British developer Perfect Entertainment which was eventually granted permission. The game mechanics were inspired by LucasArts and Sierra adventures, but included some frustratingly difficult puzzles. Arriving at a time when there was still a sizeable market for PC adventure games, *Discworld* was reasonably successful upon release. However, the inclusion of *Monty Python* actor Eric Idle helped propel the game to cult classic status.

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Gregg Barnett

Australian Barnett began his career at Beam Software in 1983, working on titles including *Hungry Horace*, *The Hobbit* and *Way of the Exploding Fist*, the latter of which he designed himself. He rose through the ranks to eventually become software development manager, and would later assume the role of company director, overseeing the studio's burgeoning relationships with Sega and Nintendo. Barnett departed Beam in the early '90s to establish Perfect 10 Productions – which would become Perfect Entertainment after merging with Teeny Weeny Games – where he worked on the *Discworld* series of point-and-click adventures, based on the fantastical literary world created by the late, great Terry Pratchett.

Before *Discworld*, did you have an interest in point-and-click adventure games?
I liked playing most of the early text adventures, such as those from Adventure International and Infocom. Then, of course, the graphic ones such as those from Sierra and LucasArts. Plus, of course, I worked on the C64 version of one of the original graphic adventures, *The Hobbit*. So I guess you could say I had an interest in the genre!

How did you arrive at the idea of creating a point-and-click adventure game set in the vibrant *Discworld* universe?
We needed a flagship title to help launch our new studio, Perfect Entertainment. The beauty of a point-and-click adventure is that you can guarantee the quality of the gameplay on paper, something which is impossible to do with most other genres. Once you're happy with the story and puzzles, it really comes down to production values more than anything. So, point-and-click was the natural choice. An original IP would have been great, but was too much of a risk. We needed a property with a huge fanbase. I can't remember the final shortlist, but *Discworld* well and truly stood out.

Were you a fan of the *Discworld* books?
I became a fan, particularly as Terry evolved and the books became more complex in nature. I always appreciated the density of ideas and types of humour that Terry brought to bear.

How did Terry Pratchett react when you enquired about a *Discworld* video game? Did he need convincing to agree to the idea?
I came to learn that there was a 'family' of *Discworld* licensees (art, figurines, etc.) and they had all basically grown from fans with those skill sets. In other words, it was all about loving the IP and respecting it, and Terry picked up on that very early in our creative discussions. With that foundation in place, I must say it was a perfect relationship between licensee and licensor, in creative terms, at least.

Is it true that you designed the game, at your own cost, to prove to Terry how dedicated you were?
It wasn't the final detailed game design, but more of an overview – although pretty much fully worked out. Frankly, it seemed the best way of explaining what we were wanting to do. I didn't find out until much later how critical this was to us getting the deal. It turns out many UK publishers had previously offered Terry big cheques, but he was always more invested in how his IP would be treated than money itself. He was particularly keen on being consistent with fan expectations.

Why is *Discworld* based on a new story rather than an existing book? Wouldn't it have been easier to adapt an existing story?
This was actually the first creative dispute with Terry. Obviously, it made more sense to him to license out one book at a time – much safer and more financially viable. However, what I wanted was the Discworld itself, not any particular book. These days I may have settled on one series of books. The reason was so I could create an original story based on and full of Terry's ideas, but not restricted to a given book's narrative. This was purely so we could make a big game with loads of different puzzles.

How did you design the story? Was it based on a script you wrote?
I wrote a story treatment first, then I broke it up into act quests, and then puzzles for each quest. I had rules like the number of quests increases per act, and the length of their puzzle chains also increases, as well as the difficulty of the puzzles. The end result was a full game on paper where the puzzles could be playtested.

GREGG BARNETT INTERVIEW

"I wanted a total point-and-click system, instead of selecting action verbs as in the LucasArts games. As for puzzles, I was definitely wanting both slapstick and bizarre, much like some of the more wacky puzzles in the Monkey Island *games."*

Were any elements of the design inspired by any previous LucasArts and Sierra adventure games?
Yes and no, I guess. I wanted a total point-and-click system, instead of selecting action verbs as in the LucasArts games. As for puzzles, I was definitely wanting both slapstick and bizarre, much like some of the more wacky puzzles in the *Monkey Island* games. Of course, we did start working with Sierra on the title, using their engine, so it was quite close to *King's Quest* for a time, but they incurred huge losses with their online world venture, and as a result closed down all third-party projects. That's when we placed an ad in the trades and asked publishers to bid for the title, and as a result Pysgnosis came on board. We then developed an engine from scratch.

How did you come up with your Rincewind character design? Was it based on anyone?
In the end, not really. It started off a little like John Cleese, but he wasn't interested in voicing the character, and Eric Idle came on board, but we already had a character by then. In a later discussion with Terry, it turns out his vision had been Rodney in *Only Fools and Horses*. If I had known that up front, it would have been a good starting point!

The voice acting was something really different at the time, using professional actors. Was this something you really wanted to do from the start?
Certainly and, more to the point, actors from classic British comedy shows. I was after *Monty Python* (Eric Idle), *The Young Ones* (Nigel Planer), *Blackadder* (Tony Robinson), *Red Dwarf* (Rob Llewellyn), among others. I backed that up with professional multi-voice actors from *Spitting Image* (Kate Robbins and Rob Brydon), although Kate became a TV actor down the track and even won a BAFTA, and Rob of course became very successful on TV. I just had to have a *Doctor Who*, so Jon Pertwee came on board. I even tried to get Spike Milligan for the sequel, but there were too many concerns about his health.

▲ The animated introduction to *Discworld* in which a secret brotherhood summons a dragon to terrorise the city state of Ankh-Morpork.

What was it like working with this incredible acting talent? Did it create any issues?
It was absolutely great; they were all friendly, professional and funny. We recorded Eric in Los Angeles in day-long sessions, which he would often break up by standing on his head between takes. I remember, it was just after Graham Chapman's funeral, where John Cleese, I think, had said he wanted to be the first person to say 'f**k' at the funeral. I asked Eric to say something similar about this game, and he went off into a great swearing tirade, which was recorded.
I actually completely forgot about it, until one night working back late in London, a call came in from a woman who'd just purchased *Discworld* for her little boy, and she said, "Listen to this", putting the phone to the computer. It had crashed and was playing Eric's swearing tirade on a loop.
I was anticipating a severe telling off, but she said it was the "f**king funniest thing" she'd ever heard! Eric also wrote and recorded the song, 'That's Death' for the sequel, totally at his own expense, creating a band from well-known jazz musicians who were friends of his!

"I brought on board an excellent art director from the animation industry, Nick Martinelli, who did the concept art and background layouts. We then set up a small professional team that illustrated and coloured them."

Did Terry have any input into the design on *Discworld*?
I established a creative and trust-based relationship quite early with Terry. Basically, I did story, puzzles and dialogue (using a dialogue writer), and Terry would take the dialogue (around 8,000 lines in the first *Discworld*, lots more in the sequels), and tweak it to his satisfaction. He called this sprinkling fairy dust, which was actually his credit for one of the games. In fact, Terry was more concerned than anything about meeting the expectations of his fans, which quite often had evolved separately from where he might have started. He had the odd pet demand – Elven queens must have raven hair, for example – but, all in all, he was remarkably easy to work with. As for puzzles and such, I think he only ever removed one Douglas Adams reference I had used.

Did you always want to include an animated sequence to the start?
Of course, but budgets were limited, so the first game used the in-game engine to do the intro. The second game was closer to the mark in that it used a completely animated intro based on the opening to one of the *Lethal Weapon* movies.

Did you work closely with artists to create the backgrounds?
I brought on board an excellent art director from the animation industry, Nick Martinelli, who did the concept art and background layouts. We then set up a small professional team that illustrated and coloured them.
For the sequel, we went one step further, and sent Nick to the Philippines where he used Hanna-Barbera animators to do the work. As for the interpretation of the *Discworld* locations, Nick would take my functional requirements (what we need and where it needs to be) and my initial vision, and then go to town and create a new final vision. I used a professional character designer for the characters, and paper cel animators for the animation. We would then scan it and colour it on the computer. *Discworld 2* used full colour cel animation done by Hanna-Barbera.

Did you oversee all the graphical elements of the game?
I was intimately involved at concept time and initial production, but once we had the vision locked in and production was going smoothly, I would step back a little.

Is it true that the original *Discworld* was initially developed for DOS?
Yes, if I remember correctly, it came on 15 floppies originally!

The console ports of *Discworld* didn't review as well. Why do you think this was?
The console ports were handled more by the publisher and porting teams, with less input from me. This is more an indictment than an excuse. If I hadn't been so involved with the sequel, I might have picked up on some of the issues. Adventure games weren't seen as a natural fit for consoles, so we didn't go all out – which in hindsight is what we should have done, particularly with the UI. We should have gone back to the drawing board and designed a direct character control system that worked more naturally with console controllers. We shouldn't have ported a point-and-click to the consoles, but instead turned the game into a more natural console-based experience.

"The interesting thing is so many people of all ages were introduced to games full stop by Discworld*."*

The *Discworld* games have a reputation for being quite tough. In hindsight, do you think some of the puzzles were too challenging?
This is the common perception, and *Discworld* has been named the hardest adventure game ever by more than one source! However, the interesting thing is so many people of all ages were introduced to games full stop by *Discworld* – lots of Pratchett fans became gamers as a result – and many of those people gave incredibly good feedback. The difficulty issue was ironically more prominent among hardcore gamers. To a big extent I believe this is because the newbies followed the sign posts and crumb trails, sort of letting themselves be led along a bit. I did notice that serious players often ended up with an inventory teeming with objects, which confused things quite a bit. Tackling quests one at a time was much easier than running around collecting everything and then seeing what worked where. The other thing is adventure game puzzles are invariably black and white by nature, and not a black-and-white you can get better at, but one that depends quite often on your general or pop culture knowledge. It's not like a physics-based puzzle game where skills are learnt and then tested. You can have multiple solutions and can give plenty of hints, but setting the difficulty is always problematic, because some people have never been exposed to certain things. *Discworld* quests were relatively easy if you kept on track until the end, and didn't move onto other areas of the game. Plus, the more you kept on track, the more the puzzle solutions related to what you had just learnt, as opposed to general or pop culture knowledge.

GREGG BARNETT INTERVIEW

▲ On his quest to save Ankh-Morpork, Rincewind searches for the parts to make a dragon detector in *Discworld*.

▲ *Discworld II: Missing Presumed...!? (Discworld II: Mortality Bytes! in North America)* features hand-drawn environments and a large animated Rincewind sprite.

What was Terry's reaction to the final game?
Yes, he played it all the way through before we released it. He did think it was quite brain taxing, but that it certainly was a good and faithful representation of his *Discworld*. We did some TV and press together and he was always happy to talk about it in depth. Of course, he was quite a gamer himself, although first-person shooters were more his thing.

Can you tell us about how *Discworld II: Missing Presumed...!?* came about?
Basically, everybody concerned, from the publisher down, was talking about a sequel from the day the first game was released. Terry was happy to give us the go-ahead, so I pretty much started designing it straight away. This time I wanted to share the lead character duties between Rincewind and Death, and also explore new locations in the *Discworld*. So, I came up with a drunk Rincewind and Librarian accidentally taking out Death while trying to diffuse a bomb, and then Rincewind being forced to be Death. It was really just an excuse for a lot more crazy puzzles!

Did you make any changes based on what you'd learnt from the first game?
The biggest complaint we had about the original game was there being only one wrong action response, Rincewind saying "I can't do that". So, the sequel went to town with hint-based responses, both to add variety and also address the difficulty issue a little. Other than that, it was really just all about increasing production values and fixing bugs.

***Discworld Noir* was the third game in the series, and dropped 2D art in favour of 3D. What was the story behind the creation of this title?**
Discworld Noir was the next natural step. People were receptive to a third game, but it was clear that it needed to be a little different. Hence the 3D depiction and the change to a more detective-based game. Plus, Terry gave me the freedom to do a completely new story with new characters. I've always loved combining noir with other genres – I worked on *Shadowrun* on the SNES – so this was a great opportunity to bring film noir to the *Discworld*. We changed publishers along the way, and this was also the first *Discworld* title where I delegated a lot of the story and puzzle creation – in this case to Chris Bateman, an excellent game designer and academic.

▲ You no longer play as Rincewind in *Discworld Noir*, as the main character is private investigator Lewton.

"Discworld Noir was the next natural step. People were receptive to a third game, but it was clear that it needed to be a little different. Hence the 3D depiction and the change to a more detective-based game. Plus, Terry gave me the freedom to do a completely new story with new characters."

Looking back, what parts of the *Discworld* games are you most proud of?
I'm proud that the games have become a valuable part of the overall *Discworld* canon, and that they were incredibly well received by both adventure gamers and *Discworld* fans alike. Animated *Discworld* shows followed, but we were really the first to give the *Discworld* a real look and feel. We literally brought Ankh-Morpork to life, something that hadn't really been done outside of the books before. On a more personal note, I'm proud of many of the original elements we brought to the *Discworld* – my favourite being the Suffrajester, who kept tying herself to things, and just wanted women to get the joke!

Would you have done anything differently if you had the chance to go back?
I seldom play that game, so only if there were serious mistakes made. *Discworld* was an incredible result for a startup studio with little money. Most of the people involved went on to bigger and better things in the game industry, and they all have this great title on their CV. So, no, I think we really need to be happy with what we achieved!

1995

Flight of the Amazon Queen
With a central character called Joe King, it'll come as no surprise that this is a comedy adventure in the LucasArts tradition, with clear inspiration from *Monkey Island* and *Indiana Jones*. During Joe's adventure he comes face-to-face with mad scientists, a talking gorilla and an entire tribe of Amazon women. Made without a publisher using just the programming language AMOS BASIC, it was completely re-written in the C programming language so the creators could seal a publishing deal.

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▲ A selection of richly-detailed environments from *Flight of the Amazon Queen*.

John Passfield and Steve Stamatiadis

Created by Interactive Binary Illusions and published by legendary British label, Renegade Games, *Flight of the Amazon Queen* was a unique point-and-click adventure in that it targeted the Commodore Amiga as its main platform at a time when most genre efforts were focused on the PC. Designer John Passfield has gone on to work on many other titles since – most notably the *TY the Tasmanian Tiger* series – but *Flight of the Amazon Queen* remains one of his most famous creations. Artist and fellow Aussie Steve Stamatiadis has directed numerous games since, including *TY the Tasmanian Tiger*, *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* and *Blade Kitten*.

Were you artistic as a youngster?
Steve Stamatiadis (SS): I remember when I was five or six I was a huge fan of *Speed Racer* and I would make little versions of his car by drawing the top and bottom on two bits of paper and stapling them together. After *Star Wars* came out I really got interested in special effects and movie making. I did jump around a lot of different media over the years as a kid, just trying lots of different things. It was when I got my first computer that I found I could do a lot of the things that I wanted to do in one place.

When did you first know that you wanted a career in video games?
John Passfield (JP): I remember the exact moment I knew I wanted to make video games. It was during the early '80s and I was attending a country show in northern New South Wales in Australia. The show had the usual fairground rides, cake stalls and best cattle awards, but it also had a tent with a computer exhibition. I was immediately drawn to the luminous green screen showing off a text adventure game. The game was called *Colossal Cave Adventure* and it responded to commands I typed on the keyboard. I explored a fantasy world until I found an axe and then came across a dwarf. I typed 'Throw axe' and the computer responded with 'You killed a little dwarf. The body vanished in a cloud of greasy black smoke'. It was magical; like a fantasy book, but interactive. Right then and there I knew I had to make computer games.

SS: I really wanted to make sci-fi movies. Failing that, animated sci-fi movies. Even my old Atari 800 let me do that do a certain extent, but I never considered making video games as even being an option. That probably had a lot to do with it being hard enough just finding stores here that sold computer games at that time. Games were something that was made far away, overseas. So, I worked towards doing a BA in animation. That was also the point I got my first Amiga and found that I could finally do the sci-fi animation things I wanted to do. In all honestly, I never thought of it as a career because it turned out to be a fun job.

Did you work on any games before *Flight of the Amazon Queen*?
JP: Yes, I did. After I played the original *Colossal Cave* I pestered my parents to buy a computer. Eventually we got a Microbee, which was an Australian-made computer. I taught myself to program and wrote two games during separate school holidays – *Chilly Willy*, an arcade game that was a clone of Sega's *Pengo*, and *Halloween Harry*, an original game inspired by *Ghostbusters*. I sold both games in Australia and made some pocket money; not enough to retire on, but enough to whet my appetite.

How did the idea for *Flight of the Amazon Queen* come about?
JP: Steve and I had met through a mutual friend who ran the local comic shop in Brisbane. That same friend showed us a game he was playing called *The Secret of Monkey Island*. We watched as he played the game and were blown away. It had story and character and beautiful art. It was like a comic book brought to life. We knew we had to make an adventure game. Steve was an artist and had been making cool animation on the Amiga and I was a programmer, so we decided to make a sci-fi version of *Indiana Jones*.

SS: I was breaking into comics at this point and that's how I met John, pretty much when AMOS [BASIC] came out for the Amiga. I remember the weekend I went over to his to play with my Amiga 500 and showed him AMOS. He went out and bought an Amiga and AMOS that Monday! So, with the stars aligned, we just decided that we were going to try and make a game. We originally started on a platform game called *Halloween Harry*, but both John and I had been playing a lot of *Monkey Island* and we were talking about it and how it had all the elements we liked about comics and storytelling, and it was a game. So, we started talking about what we'd like for an adventure game, what genre hadn't really been done that we'd really love to try. Something *Indiana Jones*-ish came up pretty quickly. Weirdly, I knew about – but had never gotten hold of – the *Last Crusade* game at the time and *Fate of Atlantis* hadn't been announced yet. A huge influence on *Flight of the Amazon Queen* was the TV show *Tales of the Gold Monkey*, the story of a pilot and his mechanic having adventures in the Pacific. The name comes from the movie *The African Queen*.

When did development start on the game?
JP: We started making the game around June of 1991. It was originally written in the AMOS language on the Amiga computer. I wrote the game engine and editor in AMOS and we hired Tony Ball to convert the game to C for the Amiga and PC. Our publisher thought that people might not take it seriously enough if they found out it was written in AMOS, which was a variant of BASIC.

JOHN PASSFIELD AND STEVE STAMATIADIS INTERVIEW

"A huge influence on Flight of the Amazon Queen *was the TV show* Tales of the Gold Monkey, *the story of a pilot and his mechanic having adventures in the Pacific. The name comes from the movie* The African Queen."

Steve Stamatiadis

How much of an inspiration were the works of LucasArts and Sierra?
JP: We were 100 per cent inspired by LucasArts' *The Secret of Monkey Island* by Ron Gilbert, and the original *Indiana Jones* point-and-click game. We took a different direction to *Indiana Jones* by making our game sci-fi based with mad scientists and aliens – all hinged around the mythical crystal skull. Little did we know that Lucas and Spielberg would take *Indiana Jones* in that same direction many years later with the movie *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*!

How big was the *Flight of the Amazon Queen* development team?
JP: It was myself and Steve initially, then we brought Tony Ball on to do the Amiga and PC versions in C. However, we had amazing support and help from the Bitmap Brothers, including Graeme Boxall, Eric Matthews, Abby Hains, and their team.

SS: For most of the project it was just John writing and programming and me co-designing and doing all the art. Once we signed with Renegade there were a lot more people involved in things like the music and sound, but really most of it was done by three people.

What software was used in the development?
JP: For programming we used AMOS on the Amiga 500 for the initial game engine and editors, then used C for the PC and final Amiga version. For art I believe Steve used Deluxe Paint IV.

How did the story and characters evolve during development?
JP: Steve and I would spitball ideas and pick out our favourites. Steve is a very fast artist and would draw so many cool characters and objects that we had so much inspirational artwork to draw from. Many of these cool drawings would inspire new ideas for the game.

SS: I have this thing where I just like to do character designs. Often, I'll binge-create a whole bunch of characters like they belong in some movie or TV show. I guess that's just the kid in me making stuff up. When I got my Amiga, I used to love just doing screens with lines of character designs. That's how *Amazon Queen*'s characters started as well. For example, there'd be a screen of Joe and the other main characters lined up and then I'd come up with some new character and draw them standing around. Sometimes I might give them a name or a gag – like this guy is the sidekick mechanic. I'd show John and that would set him off with a bunch of his own ideas. We'd talk about it and he'd go off and come up with the great character dialogue. As a creator it's tremendously invigorating when you can collaboratively develop ideas that organically.

Is the character Joe King based on anyone?
SS: He was inspired by Jake Cutter from *Tales of the Gold Monkey*, and visually I always imagined him to look a bit like Charlie Sheen did back in the early '90s. Originally, we wanted Bruce Campbell for the voice but that was never going to happen.

▲ One of *Flight of the Amazon Queen*'s bizarre scenes in which Joe meets a talking Gorilla.

Did you create your own engine for the game?
JP: Yes, I did. We had the luxury of being able to look at the LucasArts games and kind of reverse engineer what we think they did just by playing their games.

The game is full of humour. Was this inspired by the approach LucasArts had taken with their titles?
JP: Yes, the humour was inspired in part by LucasArts but also by the TV shows, comics and movies that Steve and I grew up with. You'll find a lot of references to *Star Wars*, *Monty Python* and many other British comedies in the game.

SS: Definitely the LucasArts games – specifically *The Secret of Monkey Island*. But I'd also played *Loom*, *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken* at that point. I'd also died my fair share of times in a bunch of Sierra adventures, so I knew what I DIDN'T want to do in a game too. Yeah, I think that was just how John and I saw games and movies at the time. Though I remember we always had to tell people that it was all meant to be played straight and the humour was more from the absurd situation rather than being pantomime comedy.

"I am very proud of the CD-ROM talkie version. When we began we had no idea that we would release it with real actors playing the characters in a game Steve and I made."

John Passfield

What was the process for creating the art and environments?
JP: Steve and I would map out an area of the game, drawing up the way rooms connected as squares with important items and characters listed inside. I would then create simple screens with programmer art to block out walk paths and doors, as well as some objects. This way we could wire up the game and walk Joe King – the protagonist – around the world. Steve would draw up the final backgrounds and I would add them in and rearrange the walk paths, doors and objects to suit. We'd iterate on this, adding in animations and characters as Steve drew them up.

SS: I didn't really have access to any good way of digitising art when I was doing *Flight of the Amazon Queen*. I did have a video digitiser that could capture black-and-white images from video; it was very clunky and pretty much impossible to get an image that wasn't distorted. So pretty much everything was done in Deluxe Paint with a mouse. Like a lot of pixel artists back then, I even did the anti-aliasing and dither patterns by hand, until they added that to later versions of Deluxe Paint. I remember I did try scanning some line art for close-up shots as the basis for the pixel art, but I think all the art in the final game was 98 per cent directly digital. For characters, I'd design a 'lineup' with the character standing in their basic three-quarter pose, so that I could make sure they could be easily differentiated and were the right scale. Then I'd do a set of walk cycles if they needed to move around the game. Most characters had three directions – we'd flip the frames for left and right – but for some I'd cheat if I could and drop the forward and back frames and just have them walk off to the side of the screen. For rooms I'd rough up a simple layout, almost just stick figure-like outlines, and then start filling in the detail. Once we were happy with that I'd grab bits of the frame and make separate layers so that characters could move behind, and add some animated bits. For some of the double-width screens I'd do some foreground objects to scroll past in parallax to create more depth. For the PC version I had enough extra colours that I could also do some nice colour cycles to get even more movement in the frames. Then after we had all that I'd do any 'special animations' that we needed for each room. Usually that's Joe doing stuff – and getting hurt – when you solve a puzzle. We also did some cool room transitions that way.

What were the differences between creating art for DOS and Amiga?
SS: The actual creation for both was the same, since I did both versions on an Amiga 1200. The Amiga just had a nicer feeling mouse at the time and I didn't get a Wacom tablet until we'd finished the project. Aside from that, it was just about having more colours to play with on the PC version: 256 vs 32 on the Amiga – technically we had more on the Amiga because the menu bar was actually a different screen with a different palette to the main game. So, on the PC I could put aside a set of colours for the text, another set for the inventory, another set for the characters and yet another just for the main character. That way we could set up areas on the screen, so we could dynamically tint his colours to simulate lighting. It was a huge cheat, but it actually worked out pretty well.

"For characters, I'd design a 'lineup' with the character standing in their basic three-quarter pose, so that I could make sure they could be easily differentiated and were the right scale. Then I'd do a set of walk cycles if they needed to move around the game."

Steve Stamatiadis

Which parts of *Flight of the Amazon Queen* are you most proud of?
JP: I am very proud of the CD-ROM talkie version. When we began we had no idea that we would release it with real actors playing the characters in a game Steve and I made. That was such a thrill, to work with the voice talent who brought our world to life.

SS: That a single artist, with no previous experience making a point-and-click, could do all the art for the game. I look back on it now and it was insane, but I didn't know any better. I remember John and I used to beat ourselves up for taking three years to make the game, but there was only the two of us working on it for ages without even a publisher. Our mantra really was 'Just do it'.

Do you have any anecdotal stories from the development?
JP: We recorded the voices for the CD-ROM version in London. Will Jeffery, the voice director, was a huge fan of Penelope Keith and said he would try and get her for the game. She starred in a number of classic British TV shows like *To the Manor Born* and *The Good Life* shows we had all watched growing up. We thought there was no way she would be involved in a video game, but it turned out her kids loved games and she agreed to do some voices for us. I was very nervous about meeting her as she is a British icon – but she was extremely down to earth and a very lovely lady!

JOHN PASSFIELD AND STEVE STAMATIADIS INTERVIEW

SS: One thing that really stuck in my mind was having to rework the baddie soldier sprites three times. Originally, they were plain old Nazis and we were asked to make them not-Nazis to help with the German version of the game. We were fine with that, even though it meant I had to go through and reanimate half a dozen characters with new costumes. Remember, this was all done by hand and each character also got a 32- and a 256-colour version! Then, not long after I'd completed that, we were showing the game to a US publisher for distribution there and one of the things they wanted to change was to make those soldiers look even more like Bond villain-style troops, so in an effort to keep them happy the art team – me, essentially – had to redo all that art yet another time. Oh, and there was that time we found out that one of the best voice actors we used – William Hootkins, who did Frank Ironstein and many others – turned out to be the guy who played Porkins in *Star Wars: A New Hope*. We fanboyed pretty hard.

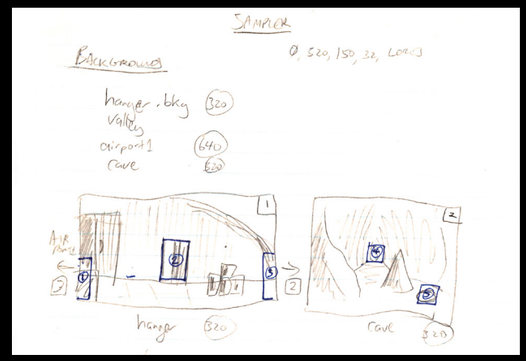
What did you think of the *20th Anniversary Edition* released in 2016?
JP: Well, I gave my blessing to the team that put that together and I supplied some extra material for it, so I'm happy with it. A newer update is out now with an improved interface so hopefully it's a game that will be enjoyed for another 20 years.

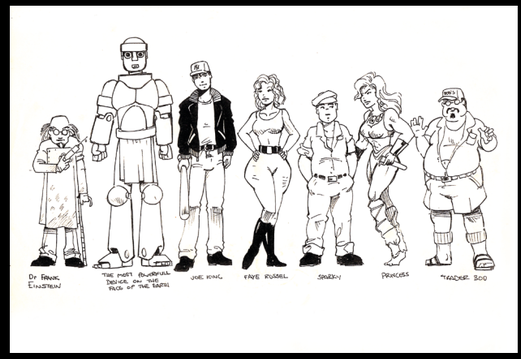
"I think the reason point-and-click games are fondly remembered (and still played today) is that they combine storytelling, character, humour, adventure, puzzle solving, mystery, animation and beautiful art in a way that other games can't."

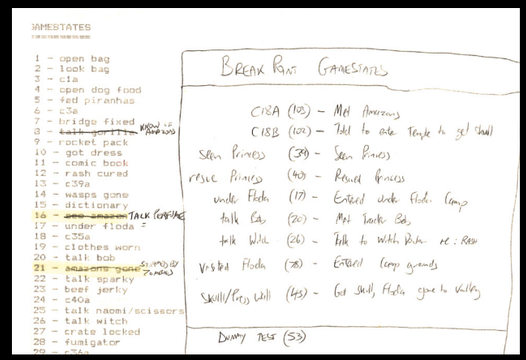
John Passfield

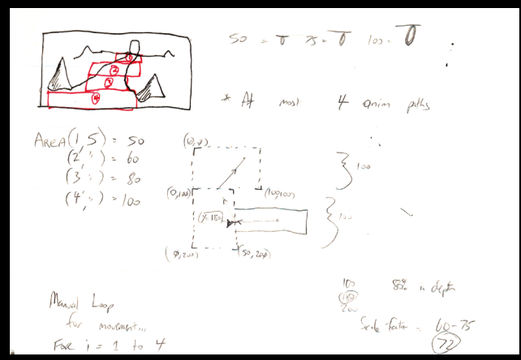
Why do you think *Flight of the Amazon Queen* and point-and-click games in general are so fondly remembered?
JP: I think the reason point-and-click games are fondly remembered (and still played today) is that they combine storytelling, character, humour, adventure, puzzle solving, mystery, animation and beautiful art in a way that other games can't. They literally are comic books or animated movies brought to life.

SS: I think it's simply that adventure games are heaps of fun. They're full of exotic locations and characters to interact with. You never really know what's going to be in the next new location, and having to solve puzzles to progress makes the payoff of the next room even bigger.









▲ Various design sketches and design documents from the development of *Flight of the Amazon Queen*.

1995

Full Throttle

Playing as Ben, a grizzly biker framed for murder, *Full Throttle* follows a different, more gritty road to other LucasArts adventure games. However, puzzle solving and conversations are still the focus, all done using just four action icons. Although notably shorter than the company's other titles, the twisting story is gripping, with cartoon-style cutscenes and a stellar voice-over cast. *Full Throttle* was the first LucasArts adventure title to be released for Microsoft Windows and on CD-ROM only.

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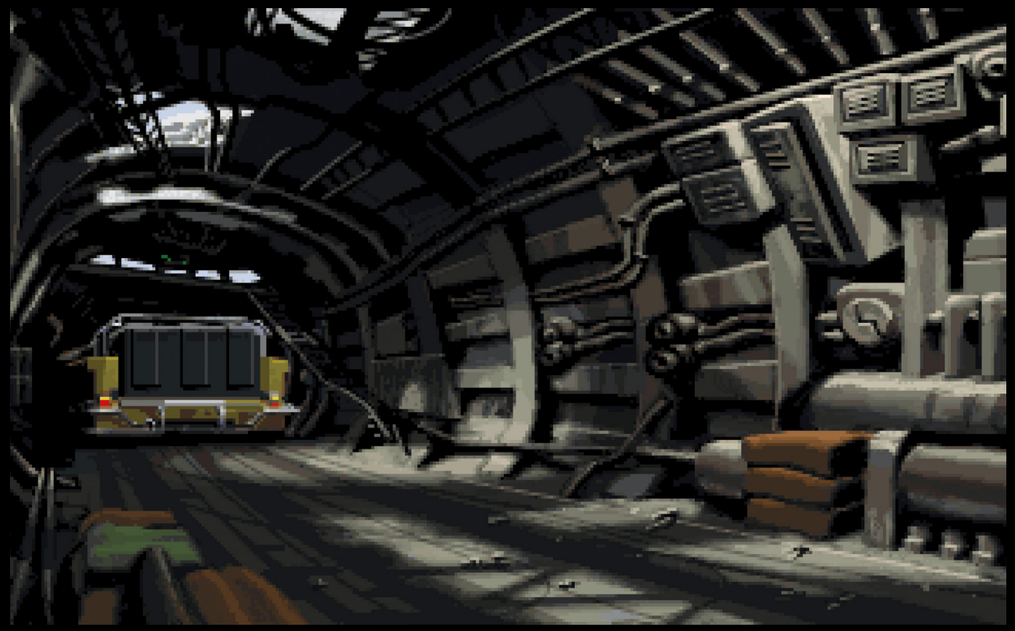

▲ The minimal backgrounds in *Full Throttle* feature striking silhouettes and dark spaces that force your eye to the characters in a scene.

1995

Simon the Sorcerer II: The Lion, the Wizard and the Wardrobe
In the ending of the first game, Simon claimed there would be a sequel and Adventure Soft honoured this promise. Now boasting 50,000 frames of animation and a streamlined icon interface, *Simon the Sorcerer II* continues Simon's parody-filled, self-aware adventures. Simon is now noticeably a little older and voiced by Brian Bowles. It'll take over 20 hours to get through, so it's an impressively long game – thankfully a new world map makes moving between locations easier.

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1995

▲ There are more than 80 locations to explore in *Simon the Sorcerer II*. Each one is hand-drawn with the artist frequently playing with perspective.

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1995

The Dig

This sci-fi adventure is often considered the black sheep of the LucasArts back catalogue for its darker tone and more complicated logic puzzles. An ambitious project, *The Dig* featured a full voice-acting cast (including notable voice actors Robert Patrick and Steven Blum), an orchestral score and elaborate 3D models designed by artists at Industrial Light and Magic. LucasArts' proprietary 'Interactive Streaming Animation Engine' meant the high-quality full-screen videos can be displayed even on lower spec machines.

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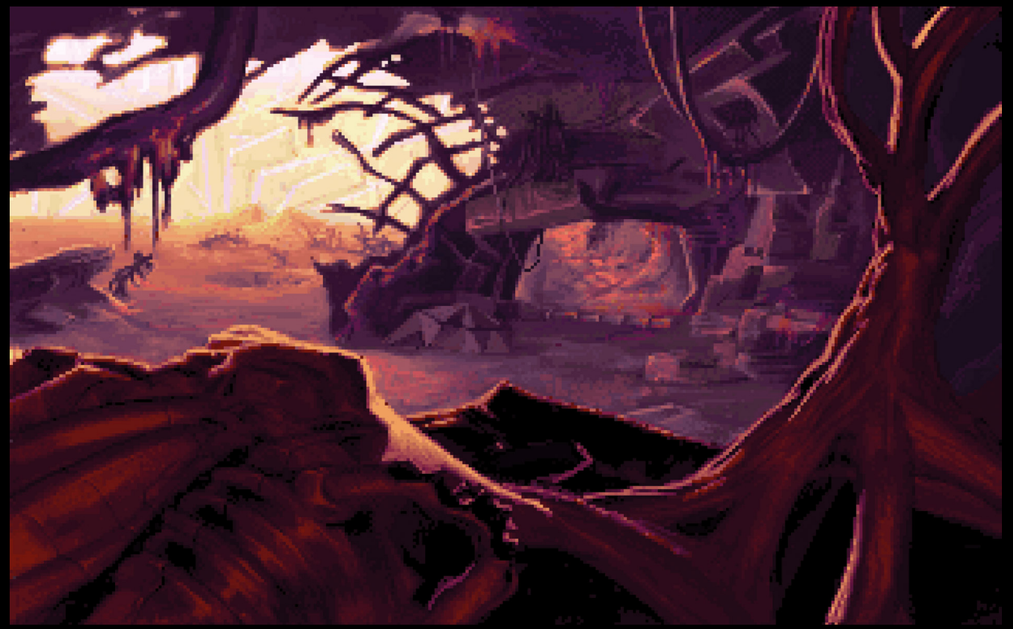
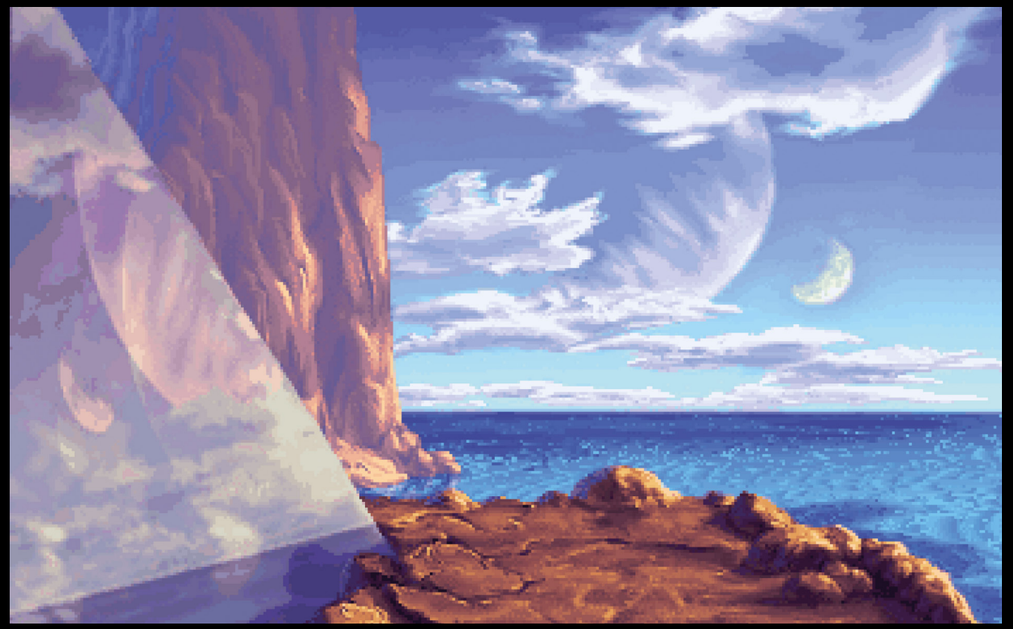
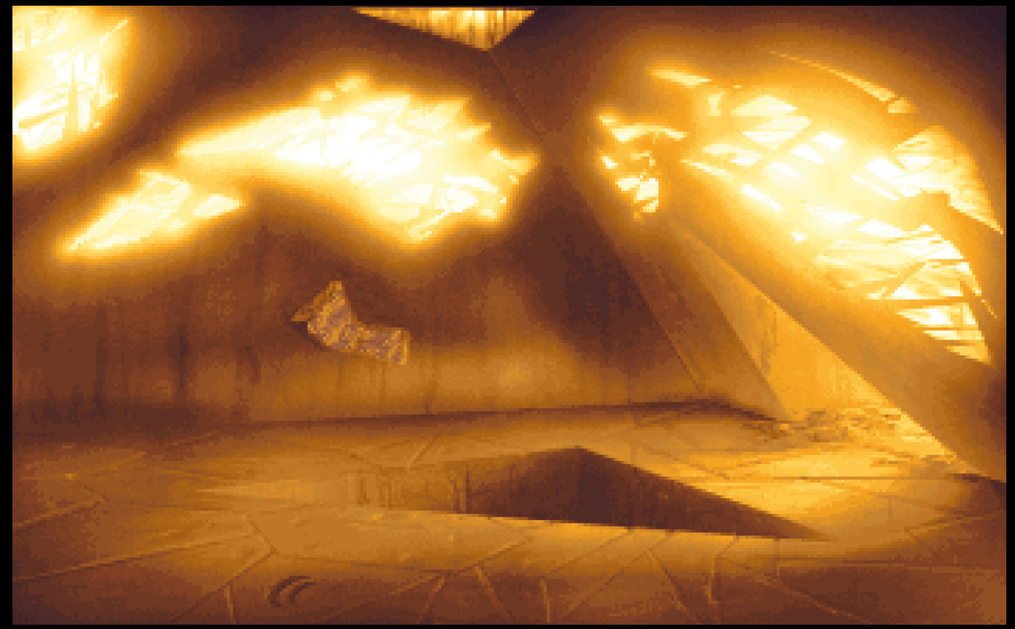
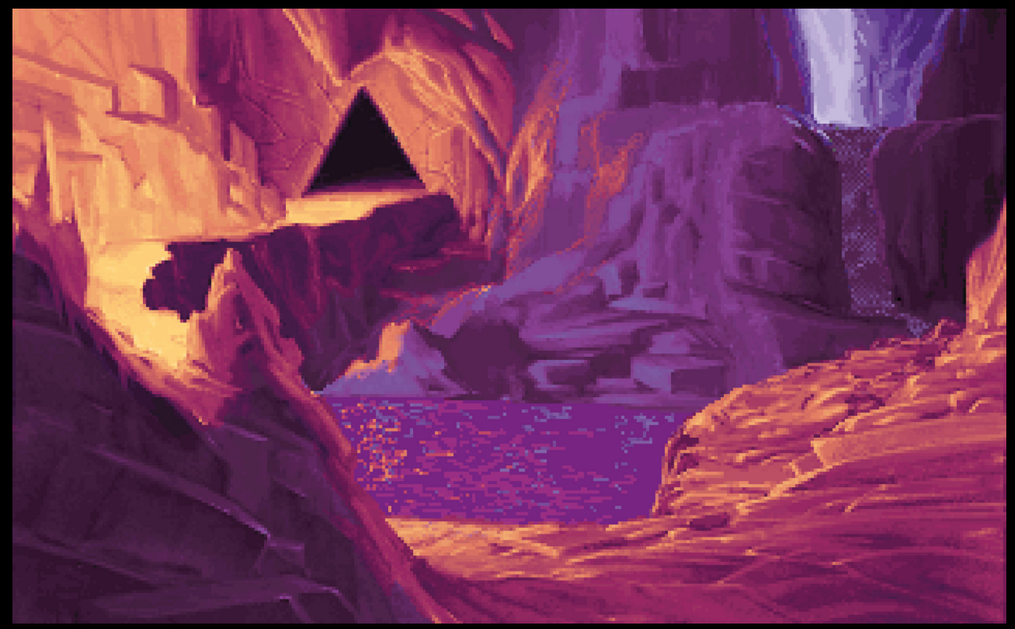








▲ A selection of the otherworldly science fiction backgrounds in *The Dig*, illustrating how the game consists of a combination of hand-drawn graphics with pre-rendered 3D elements.

Brian Moriarty

Brian Moriarty began his career as a Technical Editor on the Atari 8-bit computer magazine *ANALOG Computing* before moving into game design with Infocom, famous for its text-based adventure titles, such as the famous *Zork* series. A chance encounter led to a job at Lucasfilm, where Moriarty devised *Loom*, a fantasy title that moved away from the studio's humour-led approach to deliver a story that could have leapt from the page of one of Tolkien's stirring epics. He would also work on *The Dig*, one of LucasArts' most protracted projects; but when development stalled in 1993 he left the company to join Rocket Science Games. He is currently Professor of Practice in the Interactive Media and Game Development program at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

When did you become interested in the world of computing?
My first 'computer' was one I built myself, in fifth grade, when I was about ten years old. It demonstrated simple logic using glass marbles, which rolled along grooves made in a piece of wood. Later, I built an upgraded version which used switches and light-bulbs, and even got my photo printed in the local newspaper. Then, in 1978, while working at a Radio Shack store, I learned to program the TRS-80. The first computer I actually bought was an Atari 800 with a disk drive and 48K of RAM, in 1981.

You developed three text adventures as a designer for Infocom – *Wishbringer*, *Trinity*, and *Beyond Zork* – before joining Lucasfilm and creating *Loom*. How did you end up there, and why did you decide to switch companies?
I went to a lecture by game designer Chris Crawford, that was part of an annual San Francisco event called the West Coast Computer Faire. Because I had arrived a few minutes late, every seat was taken except for one in the front row, next to a fellow called Noah Falstein. After Chris's lecture, he glanced at my name badge and introduced himself as a designer at Lucasfilm Games. I hadn't heard of Noah, but I'd certainly heard of Lucasfilm, and he had heard of me from my work at Infocom. After chatting for a few minutes, Noah mentioned that Lucasfilm was looking to hire another game designer. He asked me if I might be interested in working there. When I worked at Infocom and made those three games, I was the game designer, the programmer, and also the package author and partly the designer. I basically did the whole thing myself – and things at Infocom were not going well. The company had been bought by Activision two years earlier, and was chafing under management demands for more games made with fewer resources. Text adventures were being strangled by the rise of graphic adventures from companies like Sierra and Lucasfilm. In fact, my boss had refused to subsidise this trip to California; I was there on my own dime, and I was grumpy about it. Noah and I traded business cards, and I began working at Skywalker Ranch in August, 1988.

How did you find the experience of working at Lucasfilm Games?
It was a great place to work and the people who worked there – the likes of Ron Gilbert, Tim Schafer, Dave Grossman, Noah and Hal Barwood – were all incredibly creative people, who combined the ability to make up fun stories and puzzles with the technical skill needed to bring their ideas to life. Ron and Aric Wilmunder were 'The SCUMM Lords', who together created and maintained the development system used to build most of the classic Lucasfilm adventure games, including the one I was about to make. One of the fun things about working at the Ranch is the décor. It's filled with original concept art and props from Lucasfilm movies. Soon after I arrived, the Games Group borrowed one of these props – the Holy Grail from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* – for a photo shoot. Between shots, I borrowed the Grail for a cup of coffee!

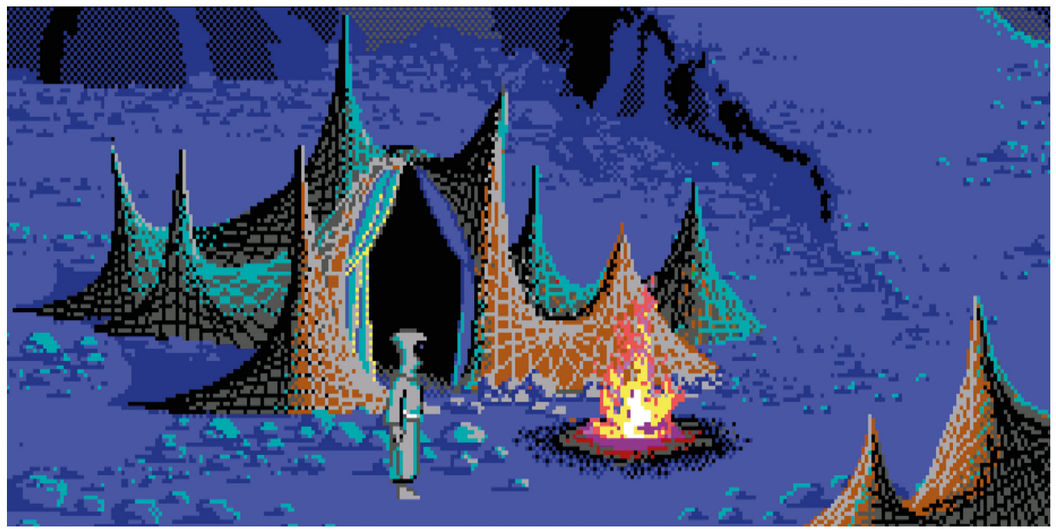
"One of the fun things about working at the Ranch is the décor. It's filled with original concept art and props from Lucasfilm movies."

How quickly did you start working on the project that would become *Loom*, and what was the inspiration behind it?
The original concept document for *Loom* bears the date August 18th, 1988, which was less than three weeks after I started working at the Ranch. My previous games for Infocom were all fantasies, and Lucasfilm hadn't published anything in that genre since *Labyrinth* in 1986. So I decided to make my new game a fantasy. One afternoon, I was leafing through a computer magazine and came across an advertisement for what I think was a maths co-processing card. The copy under the photo referred to the circuit board as a 'loom'. Seeing this word applied to that circuit board touched something in me. Somehow, in that moment, the Age of the Great Guilds and the tragedy of the Weavers was born, complete and whole. I spent the rest of that afternoon just writing it all down.

How did *Loom* got its unique look?
When the project started I spent quite a bit of time with lead animator Gary Winnick and background artist Mark Ferrari, discussing possible visual styles for the game. I discovered that we all shared a particular admiration for Walt Disney's 1959 production of *Sleeping Beauty* – which also happens to be based on a Tchaikovsky ballet, and uses the ballet's music, much like *Loom* uses the score to *Swan Lake*. *Sleeping Beauty* has a very striking look, unlike any other Disney animation feature. Walt reportedly wanted it to look like a moving tapestry. Mark adapted the look of the film to the 16-colour EGA palette with fantastic results. Mark was a fantasy illustrator, and a master of the coloured pencil. He'd been contracted by Gary to do backgrounds for *Zak McKracken*, despite having no prior experience with computers. When *Loom* was released in 1990, it was hailed as one of the most beautiful computer games ever created, due almost entirely to Mark's particular combination of fine taste, artistic skill and technical curiosity. Gary was the first artist hired by Lucasfilm Games. He had provided backgrounds, characters and animation for nearly every title published since 1984, and had also co-designed *Maniac Mansion* with Ron Gilbert. Gary served as *Loom*'s lead character designer and animator, creating hundreds of stands, walks, sits, swims, gestures and falls for the main character, Bobbin, who I am quite sure he wishes never to animate again...

What was the thought process behind the unusual music-inspired player interface?
When I started designing *Loom*, I had every reason to expect it would look and play pretty much like its predecessors, *Maniac* and *Zak*. But from the beginning I wanted *Loom* to offer a closer connection. I wanted the player and Bobbin to perform magic together. My first idea was that the player would draw previously learned shapes on the screen to invoke magic spells, with Bobbin imitating your motion as you drew. But many customers with DOS machines did not have a mouse. *Loom* had to be playable with the keyboard alone, and you really don't want to make players perform gestures on a keyboard... Finally, I came up with a system with no physical inventory. Many objects emit musical notes when you touch them. These four-note sequences, called drafts, are the verbs of *Loom*. They can be applied to any touched object by repeating the note sequence on Bobbin's distaff. Bobbin's performance is synchronised with yours. You play together. *Loom* is unlike traditional adventure games in many ways... Its simple mysteries are designed to engage your imagination and draw you deeper into the story, not to frustrate you or increase the amount of time it takes to finish.

Is it true that Steven Spielberg was a fan of *Loom*, a coincidence that led, in part, to your next big adventure project for Lucasfilm?
Steven had always been a fan of our games. One day in the summer of 1990, after *Loom* had been published, I was sitting at my desk, and I got a call saying, "Mr. Spielberg would like to speak with you now", and I said, "Oh really?!" So, I figured this was a prank... It wasn't – it actually was Steven Spielberg. He was playing *Loom* with his son Max, who was five years old at the time, sitting on his lap, and he wanted hints.



▲ Bobbin Threadbare explores the Weaver's villiage in *Loom*.

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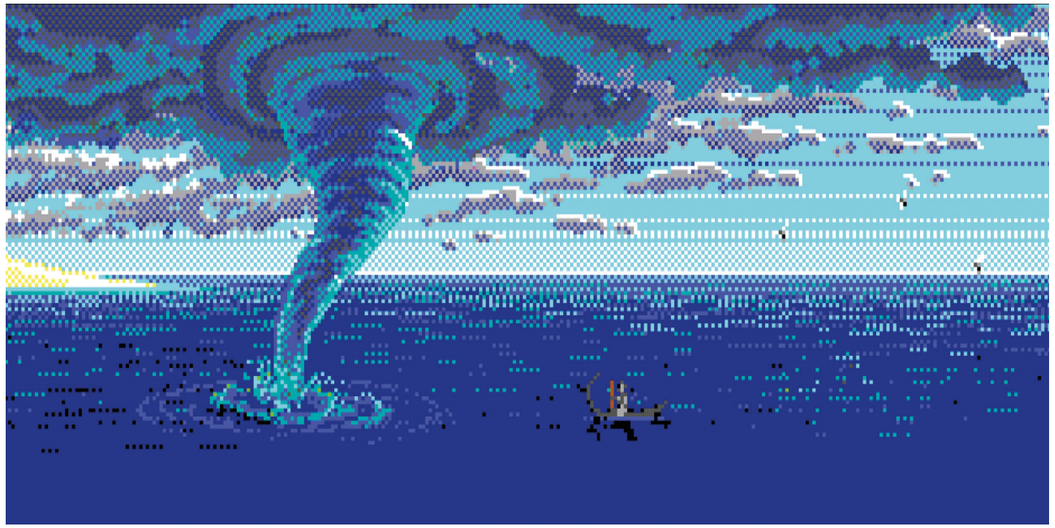


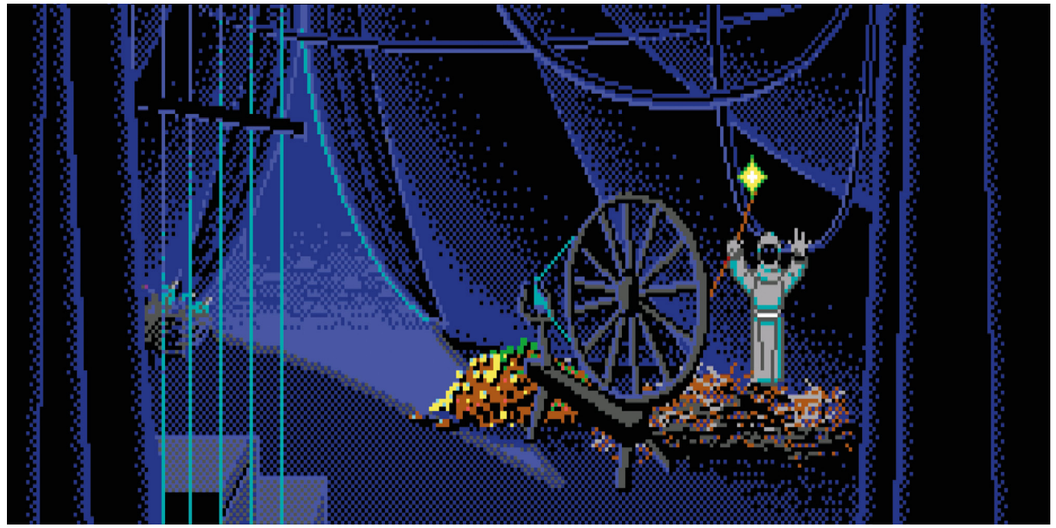
▲ Bobbin sails towards the eye of a storm in one of the many animated cutscenes in *Loom*.

So, I spent the next two hours on the phone walking him through *Loom*. In our chat he mentioned that he had wanted to make an adventure game, which later became the project *The Dig*. The idea of *The Dig* originally started as an idea for an episode of a TV show that he was working on called *Amazing Stories*. It was an anthology series of programmes similar to *The Twilight Zone*, and he wanted to do an episode that involved archaeologists digging up a strange alien landscape, with a big zinger at the end that was kind of borrowed from *Planet of the Apes*...

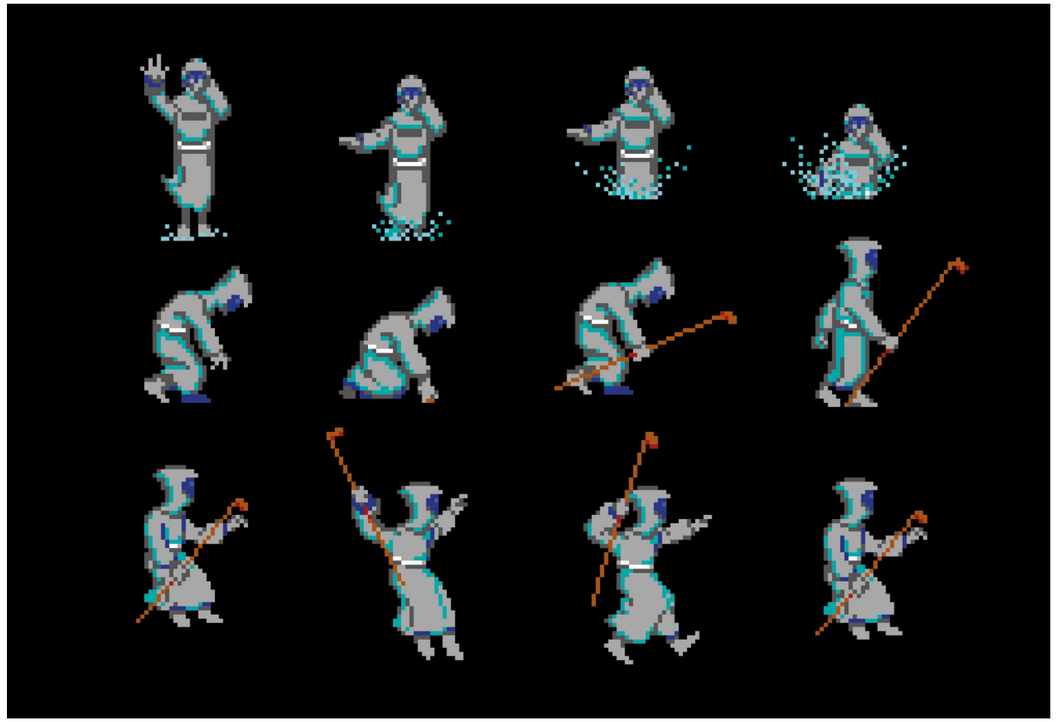
"When I started designing Loom, *I had every reason to expect it would look and play pretty much like its predecessors,* Maniac *and* Zak. *But from the beginning I wanted* Loom *to offer a closer connection. I wanted the player and Bobbin to perform magic together."*

***The Dig* was famously a very difficult project, with the longest development period of any of the LucasArts adventures. How did you initially become involved?**
It is a very sad, complicated tale. A book should be written about it: 'How not to build an adventure game'. But this is a true anecdote. There had been rumours for some time around late '88 and '89 that Steven Spielberg was interested in working with us, and Steve Arnold, the head of the group at the time, set up a meeting for all the leaders, project leaders and stakeholders to sit down and discuss it. Due to the importance of the topic, he scheduled a meeting in the main house of Skywalker Ranch. This was George's personal conference room, with expensive furniture, shelves laden with leather-bound books, and an actual Tiffany lamp worth tens of thousands of dollars overhead. So, we're sitting there and the meeting has just begun when suddenly the room begins to tremble. And the books started falling out of the book shelves, and the Tiffany lamp started to sway, and people upstairs could be heard screaming, and I yelled at everyone, "Get under the table!" We were experiencing the great Loma Prieta earthquake of '89, which started four minutes after the meeting began. Perhaps this was a warning from the gods not to proceed with the thing we were about to proceed with. I didn't touch the project or hear anything, as I was deep in the middle of *Loom* at the time. I still had six months of work left on it, so I wasn't expecting to be much involved with *The Dig*. But Noah Falstein had been tapped as kind of the person most likely to head the project. After *Loom*, I was working on a game based on a project that George was working on – a TV show based on *Indiana Jones* called *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*. The show didn't succeed and in the end it got cancelled, and the game I had been working on for about a year got cancelled. Then word came up through the grapevine that management was dissatisfied for some reason with the progress of *The Dig*, that they'd decided to stop Noah's version of the project, and that in fact, Noah was leaving the company. So that left *The Dig* kind of up in the air. That was about at the same moment that they cancelled *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, leaving me with no project. So they came to me and asked if I would be willing to take a look at Noah's work and see what could be done with it. And, foolishly, I said "Yes".

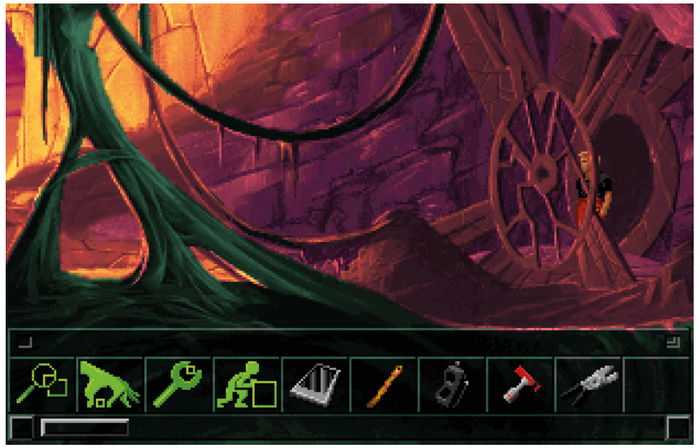
BRIAN MORIARTY INTERVIEW

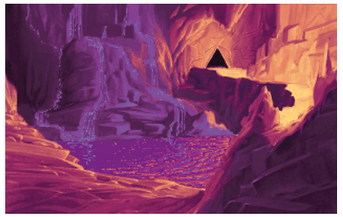
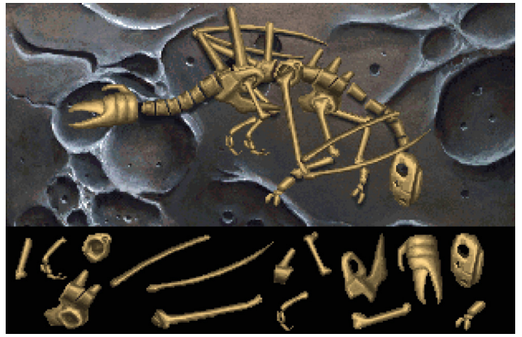
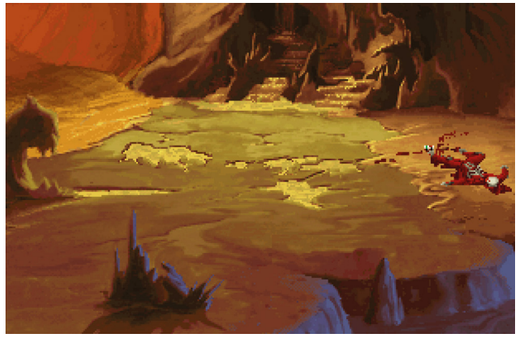
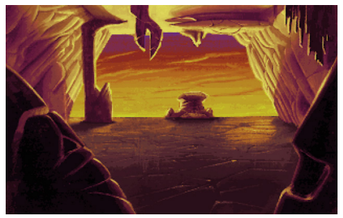


▲ A scene from the dark tent in *Loom* where spinning the wheel turns straw into gold.



▲ Animated sprite frames of Bobbin Threadbare in *Loom*.



▲ Some early screenshots of Brian's version of *The Dig*, which has noticeable differences to the final version.

BRIAN MORIARTY INTERVIEW

"The children who played that game loved it. I can say that a week does not pass when I don't get an email out of nowhere, from somewhere in the world, thanking me for Loom*."*

What was the state of the project when you took it over?
I looked at everything Noah had done, and I kind of came to the same conclusion that management had come to – there was a lot of nice art and a lot of good ideas but no clear game; no clear path where it was supposed to go. There were a lot of systems and lots of visual production design, but there was no story. So, I was perplexed. Should I try and keep as much of it as I could and fit something into it? Or just start all over again? I decided, "Let's just start from scratch." If I'd had any brains, what I would have done is holed myself up in a room with a couple of artists and programmers and hammer out a complete design document that specified every puzzle and every room, and figured it all out on paper in advance, taking the six months it would have taken of full-time work to do that... And then we would have emerged ready to go into production. That is how they eventually ended up making games at Lucasfilm, and everywhere else. If you don't lock down everything essential in advance, you risk ending up with an incoherent mess, with lots of work that never gets used.

What sort of problems did you encounter in trying to completely rebuild your version the game?
All the Lucasfilm adventure games at the time were made using SCUMM. However, there was another game team working at Lucasfilm led by Larry Holland doing all of the flight games: *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, *X-Wing* and *TIE-Fighter*. He wasn't using SCUMM – he was using a proprietary engine, which included a cutscene system made by a Lucasfilm employee which allowed enormous flexibility in presentation, far more than SCUMM. You could do multiple planes of scrolling in any direction at 24 frames per second, in full colour, while SCUMM was still at *Monkey Island*-level tech. So I said, "This is a Steven Spielberg adventure. Shouldn't we be using that good engine over there instead of this? Or is there any way to bring them together?" But people tend to be proprietary about their tech, and it wasn't a good way to promote harmony in the company. In fact, it tore the technical sides of the company apart with me in the middle. But I did manage to cobble together, using that other technology, an adventure game engine we called 'Story-Droid'. And we managed to put together an alpha-build of a complete game. But the pressure on me over those three years working on the game, the stress of it, nearly drove me to a nervous breakdown.

Like Noah, you left *The Dig* before the game was completed. Do you have any regrets about that?
After I resigned from the game, they cast around for a while, throwing it at different people, and it ended up in the lap of Sean Clark, who, even though it took him another two or three years, finally, in '95, finished and published it. And not many people know this, but *The Dig* is actually Lucasfilm's best-selling adventure game. So they succeeded. The game as published has quite a bit of my design in it, but it is not my design. A lot of my ideas and characters and situations and some of the puzzles are still there in some form, but the overall shape has changed, and particularly the entire last third of it is completely new. They took my ending and scrapped it and put in the different ending. So, credit to Sean Clark and their crew for taking my alpha and re-forging it. I actually went to Sean, when I knew they were about to ship, and very politely said, "I know I have no power or control over this, but I would really appreciate it if you took my name off it. It's not really my game anymore and you should get full credit for it." And for whatever reason they decided to give me a little credit anyway. For me, it was a professional catastrophe... but I learned a great deal about how not to make games.

"I've been watching the genre with interest over the years, and I'm very glad that the Internet is allowing the players who still love adventures to connect with the designers who love to make them."

Do you still have an interest in the point-and-click adventure genre, and do you have any favourite games from the LucasArts era?
My favourite Lucas adventures are *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, and also *Grim Fandango*. I've been watching the genre with interest over the years, and I'm very glad that the Internet is allowing the players who still love adventures to connect with the designers who love to make them.

While *The Dig* is obviously a somewhat painful memory for you, are you still proud of *Loom*?
Loom was never a hit but, to be fair, neither were any of the other adventure games we made. *The Secret of Monkey Island*, which is now widely considered to be one of the greatest point-and-click adventures ever made, was actually not a very big seller. It only sold 30 or 40,000 copies. The sales of these games were very low compared to, say, the sales of Sierra games. And although *Loom* won a lot of awards, and people liked the story and the unusual user interface, it wasn't like the other games... The adventure fanatics thought it was too easy and over too fast. But that's not who I wrote it for. And what I didn't realise is that the people I had written it for were the people who I wouldn't hear from for a few decades. The children who played that game loved it. I can say that a week does not pass when I don't get an email out of nowhere, from somewhere in the world, thanking me for *Loom*. Now, it's being touted – a bit inaccurately – as the first 'walking simulator'. If I have one regret about *Loom* it's that I didn't pursue the sequels, *Forge* and *The Fold*. But I think the environment at Lucasfilm just gave us carte blanche to experiment, and I'm glad I did...

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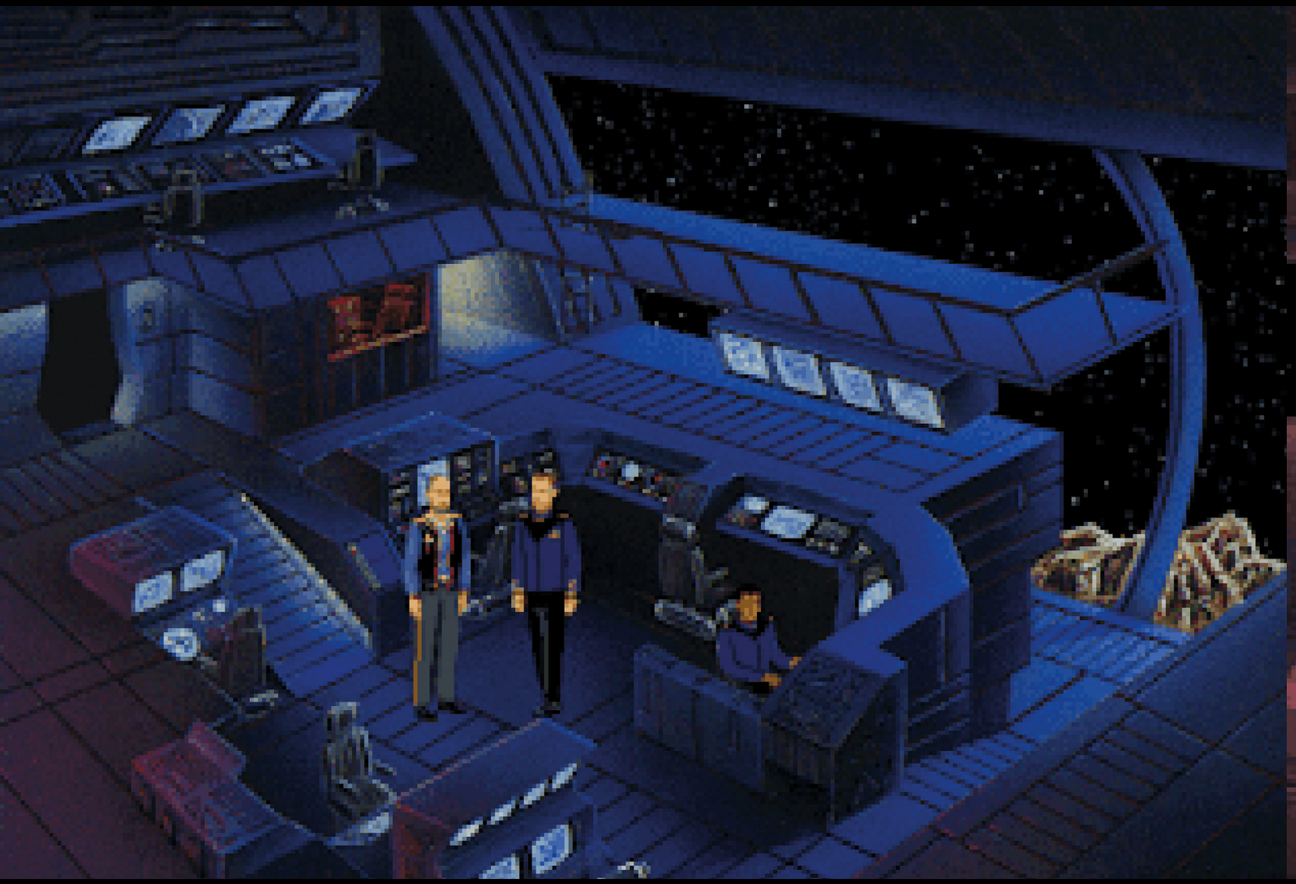
The Orion Conspiracy

With advanced SVGA graphics, CGI cutscenes and usable-object highlighting when a player explores an environment, *The Orion Conspiracy* offered many revolutionary ideas. However, it was the brave narrative that's considered most noteworthy; at a time when most point-and-click games were comedic, *The Orion Conspiracy* not only contained graphic violence and profanity, it was also one of the first games to address subjects such as homosexuality.

1995



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1995

Touché: The Adventures of the Fifth Musketeer

The team at Clipper Software were clearly fans of *The Secret of Monkey Island*. The game's main character, Ensign Geoffroi Le Brun, is almost a French, 17th-century Guybrush. The SVGA graphics were, however, crisper than LucasArts' games at the time. Over an 18-month period, Teoman Irmak was the only artist working on the game. His intricate scrolling locations started as pencil drawings and were finished using traditional watercolours, then scanned and digitised.

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1995

Space Quest 6: Roger Wilco in the Spinal Frontier

As this was the first *Space Quest* game to be released exclusively on CD-ROM, detailed SVGA graphics and voice-overs for conversations came as standard. Considering the rivalry between the companies, it's surprising that the typical Sierra iconcycle interface was replaced with a LucasArts-style verb window at the bottom of the screen. Also, while protagonist Roger can still die, unlike all previous *Space Quest* instalments, a retry option is immediately available. Despite the changes in game mechanics the sci-fi parody humour of the series remains.

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Aric Wilmunder

Starting his career at Atari in the '80s, Aric Wilmunder eventually found himself at Lucasfilm Games where he remained until 1999. His name may not be as instantly recognisable as Tim Schafer or Ron Gilbert, but he was instrumental in the creation of the SCUMM game engine and would go on to manage the International Development Team at the studio.

How did you first get your job at LucasArts?
You might say I won the genetic lottery. In my case, I was born in the right place at the right time to the right parents. I grew up in Palo Alto, the heart of Silicon Valley. I grew up fascinated by computers. I paid my college expenses by programming computer games for the Atari 800 and later accepted a position at Atari Corporate Research. I later joined a team within Atari Coin-Op where I was so focused on my work that I hadn't been paying attention to what was going on. When I started, there were over 8,000 employees, and that number had dwindled to close to 500. One day I came in and my entire team had been let go. I was invited to visit the team at Lucasfilm who were aware of my work with 3D graphics. I think I was the tenth member of what later became LucasArts and I worked there for 15 years.

Can you tell us about the creation of the SCUMM engine?
Despite working on and even managing the SCUMM system for nearly a dozen years, I've always felt over-credited with my role in the creation of SCUMM. It's important to remember that SCUMM is not just the programming language used to create 'SCUMM' games, it is also the name of the compiler that converted that language to tokenised commands that the game engine would run, as well as the name that eventually became synonymous with the entire set of tools used to create these games. This was an amazing team effort and is a bit like the lyrics 'All gave some, some gave all', where Ron Gilbert was the person with the vision, and the entire organisation did what we could to bring that vision to life. That's just the way we worked.

To put the creation of SCUMM in perspective, it's important to see some of the technological pieces and design philosophies that were in place at the start. In one of LucasArts' early games, *The Eidolon*, Charlie Kellner wrote a simple animation cel editor that ran on the Atari 800. At one point, Ron and I needed the cel editor for a project, but Charlie was no longer with the team, so in a marathon weekend we converted the cel editor to the Commodore 64. This became the basis of the animation tool used for *Maniac Mansion*. We now had the ability to create characters that could walk, talk and do simple animations.

Ron and I shared an office, and we'd been thinking and talking about adventure games for years. Ron saw the true promise of adventure games, but he really felt that they hadn't been implemented properly. He didn't like player death, and he really didn't like what we called 'meta-gaming' where you had to die in order to learn the solution to a puzzle, a solution you would then use when you reloaded a saved game. He decided that he would make every effort to ensure that all of the clues to puzzles were accessible so a player could solve the problem using logic, not the save/load feature.

I'd become interested in the IBM PC computer and developing games using higher-level languages, like C, and I'd talked our boss into letting me apply this approach to *Maniac Mansion*. During the development, Ron had been dating a law student, who in the game world became one of the college co-eds that fly to Mars in *Zak McKracken*. I was a month or two into the project when Ron's girlfriend left for China to work as an English Language instructor. Over the next few weeks Ron began to lose focus on work until he came in one day and announced that he'd just bought a ticket and was leaving for China to join his girlfriend. This put me in quite a pickle. I was familiar with much of the code for the SCUMM system, but there were parts that only Ron knew. There were a few occasions when I found it was easier to just emulate the old instructions using the new language to get the system working. Even with Ron's absence, the project went exceptionally well.

"Ron and I shared an office, and we'd been thinking and talking about adventure games for years. Ron saw the true promise of adventure games, but he really felt that they had not been implemented properly. He didn't like player death, and he really didn't like what we called 'meta-gaming' where you had to die in order to learn the solution to a puzzle, a solution you would then use when you reloaded a saved game."

Were you involved in the visual look of the inventory panel and verb buttons at the bottom of the screen?
A significant factor was that we had an Apple Lisa computer and, later, Macs, so we were very familiar with point-and-click interfaces, and we wanted to apply this to games. I'd say that the interface was very much Ron's creation, with the contributions of many. Something I do wonder about is that, as a regular Mac user, they have moved to an icon bar across the bottom of the screen. I know that the Mac influenced our interface. Perhaps over time, the SCUMM interface influenced the Mac as well.

ARIC WILMUNDER INTERVIEW

"There were many people that thought that Ron's departure would be the end of SCUMM, and I would compare that view to thinking that a building would collapse when the architect leaves."

How did the SCUMM engine evolve over the years throughout the different adventure games?
I believe that there were seven significant SCUMM engines over the years that have been archived. The first was used for *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken* for the Commodore 64 and the first IBM release. After *Zak*, we began to migrate our tools over to the PC as the PC, Amiga and Mac began to grow as new markets and we needed a powerful platform to use as our base to then move to other computers. The first SCUMM game built entirely on the PC was *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Shortly afterwards, we used this system to re-do *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken* with new art and more colours.

Near the time of *Loom*, Fujitsu had developed a new machine and they wanted our adventure games to showcase the platform, so we hired a contractor to port the engine, but this became a bit of a dead end. The art had been redrawn to 256 colours but only a few computers at that time could support this, so I teamed up with a video card manufacturer and built a 256-colour version of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* that we shipped with that card. The *Loom* engine was pretty much the same as the *Indy* engine with the addition of artwork for the staff at the bottom. Having this capability, we were able to move *Monkey Island* to the new graphical inventory.

The next version of SCUMM was used for both *Monkey Island 2* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. During this time, Ron and I would meet after work and discuss SCUMM and that we thought it was a gold mine, but management wanted to focus on games like *Tetris* and our space and flight simulators. We would often talk about going out on our own and rebuilding the system, but Ron wanted to go north to Washington and I was a California native with deep roots and didn't want to leave. Ron left taking some of the scripters with him and I took on my new role setting the direction for SCUMM.

There were many people that thought Ron's departure would be the end of SCUMM, and I would compare that view to thinking that a building would collapse when the architect leaves. Ron had indeed been the architect, and I was the chief engineer, so I took on many of his responsibilities. The following years we broke significant new ground starting with *Day of the Tentacle* and the addition of CD-ROM and a full 'talkie' product. During development we realised that, for many people, the games always talked, we were just hearing the character's voices in our heads. Now we heard these voices from the computer's speakers instead.

Sam & Max didn't require significant changes to the engine, but it set high standards for its edgy humour. Tim Schafer's next project, *Full Throttle*, needed new features for playing videos, so we integrated the INSANE engine that was created by Vince Lee for *Rebel Assault*. Vince had worked for me on Amiga versions of the SCUMM engine, and once again the bar was raised.

After *Full Throttle* I took a break to design for *Indiana Jones and the Iron Phoenix*. At this same time, we'd been working with Steven Spielberg to develop a game based on his concept for *The Dig*. Two teams had started *The Dig* and failed, so on the third try they wanted me to work on the engine full-time so *Iron Phoenix* was never built, but the design documents survived, along with a comic book series based on the story.

The final version of SCUMM, or 7.0, was the version we used for *The Curse of Monkey Island*. The engines for *Full Throttle* and *The Dig* were a bit of a mash-up between SCUMM and the INSANE video player. We had two systems for drawing cursors, drawing fonts, managing memory and so on, so before *The Curse of Monkey Island*, I did a full integration of the two systems, with SCUMM actually built on top of the INSANE code.

When Tim built *Grim Fandango*, one of the young engineers that had worked for me helped him design a new engine, and I moved my focus onto new challenges.

Do you have any regrets?
I've always wondered whether I could have developed a system that used curves instead of bitmaps so, as display technology improved, our characters would look as good today on a 4K screen as traditional cel-based animation. Not a regret, but something I'll always wonder.

Aric worked on the updated VGA versions of *Loom* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

1996

Discworld II: Missing Presumed...!?

Released as *Discworld II: Mortality Bytes!* in North America, this PC, Saturn and PlayStation sequel bravely stuck to the 2D cartoon art-style of the first game, despite being released at a time dominated by polygonal graphics and 3D environments. Much of the game is viewed from unusual perspectives including very high angles. While this may have felt jarring in other games, here it feels like an oddly appropriate way of depicting the surreal world of Terry Pratchett's novels.

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Tex Murphy: The Pandora Directive

Tex Murphy is a world-weary private detective solving crimes in New San Francisco; a post-apocalyptic *Blade Runner*-inspired future city. Based on the novel by Aaron Conners, the intriguing plot sees Tex exposing a mysterious alien cover-up, and it offers three unique plot paths and seven different endings. Developed by (and starring) Chris Jones, this fourth game in the series is the most beloved by fans. The integration of FMV footage in the series was really ahead of its time, but also meant that the game came on six CD-ROMs!

1996

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1996

Broken Sword: The Shadow of the Templars
An innocent vacation turns into a conspiracy thriller when a Parisian café is bombed by a clown. Developed by Revolution Software, this first entry in the *Broken Sword* (*Circle of Blood* in North America) series delves into the legend of the Knights Templar. Using an evolved version of the Virtual Theatre engine, the gripping, theatrical adventure takes the player around the globe. The backgrounds for each exotic location were drawn in pencil first and later digitally coloured using Photoshop.

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1996

▲ One of many animated cut-scenes in *Broken Sword* featuring American tourist George Stobbart and Nicole Collard, a French journalist.

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Alien Incident

This humorous 2D point-and-click adventure game was developed by a Finnish six-person team called Housemarque, which is most well-known for its series of *Super Stardust* games. Development took just nine months and with film parody, self-referential witty dialogue, an icon-driven inventory, multiple locations and diverse characters, *Alien Incident* plays like a classic LucasArts or Sierra adventure. However, it's infamous amongst fans of the genre for the inclusion of a maze sequence, which is considered impossible to solve without a guidebook.

1996

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1996

Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail!
Often considered the best in the series, this sixth game in the *Leisure Suit Larry* series features characters that look like caricatures, which in many ways makes the lewd behaviour of gaming's greatest loser more acceptable. However, the context-sensitive interface and the gameplay remains largely the same. This time, newly single Larry is trapped on a cruise ship that is, of course, populated by inappropriately named parodies of celebrities, such as Drew Baringmore, Dewmi Moore and Jamie Lee Coitus.

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Toonstruck

Toonstruck swapped a traditional character sprite for live-action filmed footage, placing Christopher Lloyd into a cartoony game world. This, mixed with stylised pixel art, gave *Toonstruck* a distinctive, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* look. Gameplay will be familiar to point-and-click fans, using a one-icon control system based on Westwood's Kyrandia engine. Over its three years of development, the game cost more than $8 million, and reportedly only half of the planned content made it into the final product.

1996

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David Bishop and Richard Hare

Released in 1996, *Toonstruck* is one of the more unusual takes on the point-and-click genre, and arguably a game that would have done better commercially had it arrived during the golden era of the genre. Packed with technical wizardry and featuring a digitised performance by Hollywood actor Christopher Lloyd (*Back to the Future*, *The Addams Family*), *Toonstruck* mixed cartoon-style animation with full motion video and licensed music to create a totally unique gameplay experience. We spoke to executive producer *David Bishop* and designer *Richard Hare* for the inside story on this cult classic.

Before creating *Toonstruck*, were you a fan of point-and-click adventure games? If so, what were your favourites?
Richard Hare (RH): I became a fan of text adventure games in the early '80s and played numerous games designed by Scott Adams, Brian Howarth and Steve Meretzky. *Maniac Mansion* was the first point-and-click adventure game I played on the C64 and remains one of my favourites, along with *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, and *Sam & Max Hit the Road*.

Where did the concept for *Toonstruck* come from?
RH: The starting point for *Toonstruck* was a high-level story concept by David [Bishop] entitled 'Trouble in Toonland'. As fans of the genre, the team pushed for a point-and-click adventure and the gameplay and story evolved from there.

David Bishop (DB): I had the original idea. I'd always been a massive fan of *Roger Rabbit* and the idea of 'toons' and humans coexisting in the same world. Of course, the final game bore little resemblance to my original idea thanks, mostly, to the design genius of Richard Hare who took the original concept and turned it into the engaging and compelling story that was so much fun to play.

What was the development process like?
RH: Looking back, it was probably best described as organised chaos. The team gradually formed over the course of the early design and pre-production stages. Most of us were new to the company – Virgin Interactive based in Irvine, CA – some new to the country (including me), some new to the games industry (coming from a film or animation background), and none of us had worked on a point-and-click adventure game before. What could go wrong? Much of the design, story and art development – including storyboarding animated sequences – was well underway before the game engine became available. As such, it felt like we were planning the production of a movie versus making a game for about half the development cycle. This was quite alien to me and several other members of the team. Somehow, however, we managed to pull it all together.

How did the idea come about to use a digitised sprite against a pixel background?
RH: The initial *Trouble in Toonland* concept had been influenced by films such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *Cool World*, that mixed live action with animation. There were also other adventure games that had been released at that time including *The 7th Guest* (also published by Virgin) that further influenced the team's decision to go down the live action and animation route.

DB: I'm not certain who had the idea first, but a bunch of the 'clever' members of the team did spend ages developing, and then refining, the production pipeline. I do remember we had a massive green screen at one end of the in-house studio we used for most of the shoots.

Was it a technical challenge to capture the video footage and put it into the game?
DB: We had to develop brand new techniques to realistically place a living Christopher Lloyd in a cartoon world. Rob Hart, Rob Wright and the rest of the AV team created a massive eight-camera rig capable of capturing Lloyd's many canned animations from eight angles at the same time. Achieving consistent lighting, the ability to stitch together the start and end of each animation sequence and believably placing cartoon props in Lloyd's hands were just some of the many challenges the video team had to master. Making the character look like he was actually in the cartoon world was a massive challenge.

RH: The cinematic sequence cutscenes were shot using a fairly standard green screen/chroma key setup. The real challenge was shooting and creating fluid animation cycles of Drew Blanc (Lloyd) walking around and performing various actions within the game world. Robb Hart – director of digital video – designed the movable camera rig David mentions, and Laura Janczewski – video composites – deserves a lot of praise for helping to smooth the transitions between Drew's numerous actions and for transforming various green sticks and boxes into fun animated objects.

"I had the original idea. I'd always been a massive fan of Roger Rabbit *and the idea of 'toons' and humans coexisting in the same world."*

David Bishop

DAVID BISHOP AND RICHARD HARE INTERVIEW

Did you ever worry that it was too ambitious from a technical point of view?
DB: Every day. It became clear fairly early on that we'd bitten off more than we could chew in almost every respect. Too many scenes to create, sequences to animate, lines to write and then record. Everything was a little ambitious, to say the least.

Whose idea was it to use Christopher Lloyd as Drew Blanc?
RH: It was a casting agency who Virgin hired for the project. I don't recall who this was.

What was Christopher Lloyd like to work with? Did he approach this as just another acting role, or was he aware that it was somewhat different?
RH: He was likeable, professional, and put a lot of energy into every take. For the majority of the filming and voice recording he was alone with no other actor to play off, and without any physical set except for a green room and some green props for reference. I think he did a great job given these conditions. He was aware it was somewhat different and I think he liked the project for that reason. He compared it to working on *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* in terms of being creatively out-there but with a passionate vision behind it.

DB: Lloyd was very humble and approachable, not at all like your archetypal Hollywood star. I think he was aware this was something a little different. In fact, if memory serves, he'd decided to do it because his girlfriend, who played games, thought it would be cool.

What parts are you most proud of?
DB: The fact that it was actually released. It was not a straightforward project to work on and needed many incredibly talented and hard-working people to make it happen, not to mention a very patient board who gave us the additional time and funds to complete what we started when it became clear our original estimates were way off the mark. I'm also proud of the new techniques the team developed from scratch. Nobody had done anything remotely like this before. Oh, and I'm also really proud of the fact that we managed to persuade a who's who of voice talent that games were a legitimate art form they should pay attention to. Keith Arem did a spectacular job bringing Richard's dialogue to life through the likes of Dan Castellaneta (Homer Simpson), Tim Curry and the late, great, David Ogden Stiers.

RH: I think the puzzle design and sequencing within Count Nefarious' Castle is particularly strong. The team had fun mapping out the action across the multiple floors and rooms in this singular location. In particular, there's the sequence where Drew needs to retrieve a pair of sunglasses and ends up trashing Nefarious' quarters in the process – inspired by the Japanese fighting fish scene in *The Naked Gun*.

Do you have any stories from development?
RH: There are so many funny stories but what happens in Virgin stays in Virgin!

DB: I do remember Christopher Lloyd had a penchant for a certain type of chocolate or caramel bar. We always had to have a few on hand. The only problem was that bits of caramel would get stuck in his teeth making it really hard to get clear takes during dialogue recording. It sometimes sounded like Lloyd was speaking with cotton wool balls in his cheeks! Keith often had to stitch together sentence fragments from multiple takes.

Is it true that the game was shortened to meet the publisher deadline?
DB: It was actually the team that proposed a truncated version of the game because it was clear the production schedule was running away from us. It was Richard who re-wrote part of the story to allow closure in the middle while setting up part two, which sadly, we never got a chance to revisit.

RH: Yes, about a third of the content was taken out of the game – effectively the third act – and the design and story for the first two acts were adjusted accordingly. Sadly, a lot of great content was left on the cutting room floor in the process, but I understood why the decision was made and we worked hard to make the final product work as best as possible.

***Toonstruck* has gained a cult following from fans of the genre, but at the time at didn't sell hugely well. Why do you think this was the case?**
RH: I think there was a combination of reasons. To be honest, I don't think it was an easy concept to market in the first place and, consequently, I don't think the marketing team knew how to position it. I believe there were also concerns that PC gamers had become less interested in adventure games by the time it was ready to ship. As such, there wasn't much conviction behind the product at launch.

DB: Hard to know for sure. There were probably multiple contributory factors. The team never liked the box design – I remember we felt it 'jumped into the shelf' but it would be harsh to blame poor sales just on the box. So still a bit of a mystery.

Was there a *Toonstruck 2* planned?
DB: Yes, it was the second half of the game we originally set out to make.

RH: If *Toonstruck* had been more of a success, we would have used the material that was cut as the starting point for *Toonstruck 2*. Alas, that was not to be.

▲ A digitised Drew Blanc (Christopher Lloyd) stands against cartoon-like pixel backgrounds in *Toonstruck*.

1997

Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror

Six months after the events of the first game, George and Nicole are once again embroiled in a new adventure – this time trying to stop the Mayan God of Death from destroying the world. Revolution was so confident that the first *Broken Sword* game would be a success, it started work on the sequel a few months before its predecessor was even released. The original core team used the same Virtual Theatre engine, and reused some locations and character graphics, enabling them to get *The Smoking Mirror* on shop shelves within a year.

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1997

The Last Express

Much enjoyment comes from freely exploring the titular train, spying on the other enigmatic passengers that follow their own schedules and agendas. However, as the game operates in real time, failing to achieve objectives before reaching the next station can mean the intriguing central mysteries may never be solved. *The Last Express* features art nouveau-style visuals that were achieved by the developer hand-colouring more than 1,000 black-and-white stills, with the resulting characters placed into pre-rendered backgrounds.

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1997

Blade Runner
Like Harrison Ford's character in the film, Ray McCoy is a detective whose job is to hunt down rogue androids. Consequently this adventure game has an emphasis on detective work with very few puzzles. While there are also some action sequences, gameplay mainly consists of questioning suspects and gathering evidence, where your decisions influence the unfolding story. Incredibly ambitious, *Blade Runner* featured pre-rendered backgrounds and 3D voxel characters which, amazingly, didn't require additional hardware accelerators.

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▲ Set in the same futuristic dystopian world as the film, *Blade Runner* is celebrated for its incredibly intricate, almost photorealistic environments.

1997

The Curse of Monkey Island
Although made without the involvement of Ron Gilbert, *The Curse of Monkey Island* artfully dodges the end twist of its predecessor, and continues the series' celebrated humour and excellent storytelling. It's the last LucasArts game to use the SCUMM engine, although it's evolved significantly as the on-screen verb list has vanished; instead, the player chooses first the object to interact with, then the action from a medallion-style menu that appears. Moving away from the previous art style, *The Curse of Monkey Island* features cartoon-style SVGA graphics and, for the first time in the series, voice acting for all the characters.

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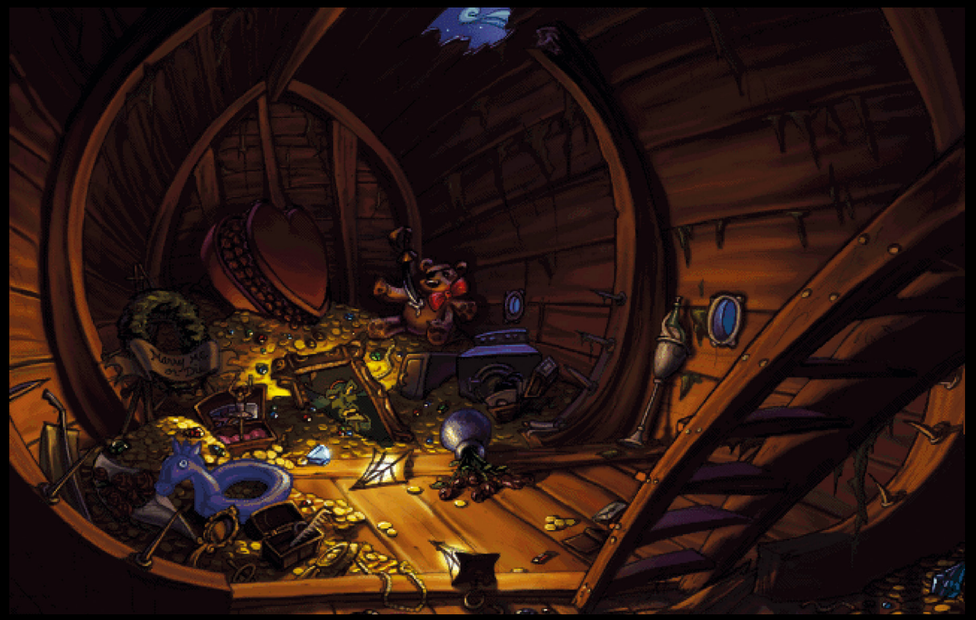

▲ Lead background artist, William Tiller, created the scenery for *The Curse of Monkey Island*, first on paper and then in Photoshop, where the images were reduced to 256 colours.

William Tiller

Enlisted by LucasArts in 1992 to work on Steven Spielberg's ambitious point-and-click adventure *The Dig*, Tiller shaped the look of the game in his role as lead artist and art director. He later worked on *The Curse of Monkey Island* and *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine* before leaving the company in 2002. Since then he has created the point-and-click titles *A Vampyre Story*, *Ghost Pirates of Vooju Island* and *Duke Grabowski: Mighty Swashbuckler*.

When did you first know that you wanted a career in video game design and art?
I don't know if I ever wanted a career in just video games because I was into a lot of things. I loved sci-fi movies, Disney animation, *Dungeons & Dragons*, books by authors like Bradbury and Tolkien, graphic novels, art, history, story-writing, architecture, music and sports. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but I was always playing video games at the local arcade and on my Apple II+. I went to CalArts to study computer animation, but the programme there wasn't teaching the fundamentals, so I switched to traditional character animation and that was probably one of the best decisions I've made in my life. It helped me become a better artist and storyteller. I'm not exaggerating when I say that every day I use the lessons I learned at CalArts.

Were you a fan of early adventure games and point-and-click adventures?
I played the *Zork* games a lot, and a few other early text adventures, but I didn't play any point-and-click games until around 1992, right after *Monkey Island 2* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* came out. I was blown away. I had no idea how far video games had come. For four years I was so focused on college that I didn't have time for TV or video games. So when I saw *Indy* and *Monkey Island*, I wasn't prepared for how good gaming had become. I started playing them a lot more when I was at LucasArts, and I was particularly attracted to the games that had good art, like *Legend of Kyrandia*, and some of the Sierra Games. Of course I started playing all the old LucasArts games that I hadn't experienced before, like *Loom*, *The Secret of Monkey Island* and *Maniac Mansion*.

Can you tell us how you first got your job at LucasArts?
I had done a lot of 2D character animation on the Amiga while at CalArts, thanks to Disney's one million dollar donation to our computer lab. The head of LucasArts' art department came down to recruit animators, saw my stuff on the wall of the Character Animation department and asked me to come up and take an animation test after graduation. Funny thing was the game company Brøderbund had asked me to work for them that same week, but wouldn't be able to hire me until late that summer. I went up to San Raphael, to the Canal District where LucasArts shared offices with ILM at the time and took my test. The weird thing about it was that it wasn't an animation test. I was asked to rotoscope Brian Moriarty walking on a treadmill. I guess the team behind *Prince of Persia* had done a lot of rotoscoping in their last game and Brian Moriarty decided he wanted that too, so they wanted to see if I could do rotoscoping. It was a two-day test, and I finished about five hours early and asked if I could do my animation sequence to show off my character animation skills. They said sure, so I roughed out a scene where a small fat dragon was running around a room trying in vain to take flight. They showed those two scenes to the art department, and they were not impressed with my rotoscoping because the test didn't show my skills, but they loved my dragon trying to fly, and that was what apparently got me the job.

"The guys would eat lunch and play Street Fighter II *on the big projection screen in the conference room we had. And after work, we'd play* D&D *in there or test out the* X-Wing *game that was still in development."*

What was it like working at LucasArts?
I liked it a lot because it was in an interesting facility called 'B Building'. It used to be home to another of Lucas' companies – I think it was called Lucas Attractions – and they'd done a nice job on the interior decorating. They left a lot of neat things behind, like a roller coaster model, brochures about proposed attractions like a Titanic-themed restaurant, as well as a lot of high-quality drafting equipment. The floor plan was open, but the walls were dark and exposed to the wiring and ventilation pipes. It had a college campus kind of feel, but cosy too. 'A Building' was where the programmers, testers, PR, marketing and management was. That was a bit more like a regular office but still nice. The guys would eat lunch and play *Street Fighter II* on the big projection screen in the conference room we had. And after work, we'd play *D&D* in there or test out the *X-Wing* game that was still in development. We could also drive out to 'the Ranch' and eat lunch at the Main House and possibly run into (or annoy) George. The artists there were all incredibly good, inspiring and generous, and all of them were interesting characters. We could rub each other the wrong way, and there were rivalries; the normal ups and downs that come with expanding – just typical growing pains. But it wasn't till I left that I realised what an island paradise of game development LucasArts was. You don't know what you have until it's gone. We used to cynically say we didn't care about all the Lucas 'Disney Dust' that came with the job, but we were lying. We did!

Can you talk about how you created your pixel art? Was it drawn by hand first or straight onto the computer?
In the beginning, it was all done using a PC and mouse – we didn't have tablets in the early days. But then we started mixing pixel art with scanned marker drawings, or paintings done with real paint. Since I was a big computer fan, I pushed for the use of software that ILM was developing and using just next door to do visual effects for the *Young Indiana Jones* TV show. I was asked to help make some animated cutscenes for *Rebel Assault*, and the project leader, Vince Lee wanted it to look like a movie because the game was in pre-rendered 3D and we couldn't do good-looking 3D characters at the time. So the solution was to use video footage from the *Star Wars* movies, but there wasn't always enough footage to cover all the scenes in the story. To add to this, we couldn't use the same actors from the movies because they legally didn't sign off on being in a video game. So, using Photoshop, we put LucasArts artists' faces on the shots taken from the movies. And at one point I had a scene to do in an officer's lounge, and I asked if we could get the costumes from the Skywalker Ranch, film it on green screen and put it all together using Photoshop. The head of Lucasfilm said only George Lucas could record new *Star Wars* footage, so George Lucas himself came down to LucasArts to view my scene to see what it was all about. He said it was okay, and we should go ahead. So I got to fulfil a childhood fantasy and be the first person other than George Lucas to film *Star Wars* footage! After that, we all started using 3D programs and Photoshop for everything, like we pretty much do today.

"In the beginning, it was all done using a PC and mouse – we didn't have tablets in the early days. But then we started mixing pixel art with scanned marker drawings, or paintings done with real paint."

You were the lead artist on *The Dig*. Were you involved right from the beginning?
There were 3.5 *Digs*, and I was involved from the beginning on *Dig* production 2, 2.5, and 3, the last one. I was hired to be an animator

▲ Examples of William's exquisite background art for *The Dig*.

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on the second *Dig* production after the initial one was suspended and then rebooted by Brian Moriarty. Then he left the company, and they assigned the project lead duties to Dave Grossman, who only worked on it for a few months, and then finally Sean Clark took over on the final one. By then I was the art director focusing on the environments, cutscenes, storyboards and backgrounds.

Can you tell us your process and inspiration for the beautiful artwork in *The Dig*? Were the environments painted first by hand?
I can't take all the credit on that. With the reboot of *The Dig* by Brian Moriarty, he and the art director, Bill Eaken, decided to go in the opposite direction of the look of the first game, which was very lush and futuristic. They went with a modern NASA feel for the technology scenes and a rocky, coastal feel for the alien world. The fear was the game would look too monochromatic if we just used grey rocks and earth tones, so they decided to offset the bleakness with bright, saturated complementary colours. This look was kept for the final *Dig* production I was in charge of, and I only made a few changes to the style, simplifying the colour scheme a bit and using more consistent hues. The game was substantially expanded and I did all the new art. Spielberg wanted a planet that had a lot of shooting stars and was in perpetual twilight, and that's what we tried to capture.

What parts of the game are you most proud of?
The original backgrounds I made I think turned out well. The effects animation was great. I like the puzzles a lot and the feel of the game. I am happy with the cutscenes, though not thrilled with the character design nor how the characters were rendered out. We had problems with the characters because the games industry and LucasArts was on the edge of going really realistic with CG animation or going towards more cartoon animation, like in *Full Throttle*. What we got with *The Dig* was a compromise, which at the time I went with, but now I think we could have made it better. But we were under the gun to get the game out and didn't have the luxury of working out the character design like I wanted to. Interestingly enough, because of this design compromise, on *Curse of Monkey Island* we probably went overboard on how much time we spent on characters so we would avoid the problem we had on *The Dig*.

"I had just finished The Dig *when I found out that Larry Ahern, the lead animator of* Day of the Tentacle *and* Full Throttle*, was going to team up with* The Dig *programmer Jonathan Ackley to revive the* Monkey Island *series, which was a risky venture considering how sacred the first two games were to fans. I lobbied for the job of head of the backgrounds, and I got it."*

What input did Spielberg have on the game?
His most significant contribution was having the planet set in perpetual twilight. It was his basic story and plot – mix the lost alien civilisation of *Forbidden Planet* with the paranoia and avarice of the gold hunters in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*. He also designed a few puzzles and scenes for the game; mostly they were all gory scenes too, which is funny. He wanted one of the characters to be eaten by a sea serpent, then show a close up of cutting the lens out of the sea serpent's eye, Low cutting off Brink's hand to save him from drowning, and a Japanese scientist named Toshi falling in and then climbing out of a pool of acid. I did that scene, and because of where I sat in 'B Building' by the walkway, everybody in the company had to walk by and see me working on that animation. Everybody started talking about this new animator doing this cool scene of the character climbing out of acid. It was a bit gruesome, for sure. Later, Spielberg told us to tone it all down because of all the heat he got from *Jurassic Park* being too gory – which it wasn't really, at least when compared to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Jaws*.

Can you tell us a bit about your work on *The Curse of Monkey Island*?
I'd just finished *The Dig* when I found out that Larry Ahern, the lead animator of *Day of the Tentacle* and *Full Throttle*, was going to team up with *The Dig* programmer Jonathan Ackley to revive the *Monkey Island* series, which was a risky venture considering how sacred the first two games were to fans. I lobbied for the job of head of the backgrounds, and I got it. Larry was going to be art director, but the game design and animation took up all his time, so we pretty much split the role. Larry wanted a new look to take advantage of the new technology and higher resolution, and to distinguish the game from the previous two. So, after a few months, we worked out an exaggerated cartoon style that was a combo of N.C. Wyeth, the Brothers Hildebrandt, Dr. Seuss and Tim Burton. I drew the backgrounds on paper, painted them in Photoshop, then reduced the colours to the 256-colour palette we had to use with the image editor DeBabelizer. I had two assistants help me with many of the backgrounds after I did the primary colour rough. People seemed to like the look, and it won a lot of awards, so I'm very proud of it.

Did you feel the pressure working on such a popular series after the success of the first two games?
I fell in love with *Monkey Island 2* the minute I started playing it, and I loved the first one too, which I started playing after I got to LucasArts. I love Disneyland a lot, and even worked there one summer, so I was a huge fan of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride; *Monkey Island* felt to me like a funny interactive version of that ride. At lunch, when I first started at LucasArts, I would play *Monkey Island 2*, and occasionally Dave Grossman and Tim Schafer would walk by and see me playing and give me tips or tell me stories about the development of the game. Unfortunately, Ron wasn't there, having quit to make the *Putt-Putt* kids' games a few months before I started. I wasn't worried at all that *Curse of Monkey Island* was going to be good, because I read the game design document and it was damn funny – plus I liked the puzzles. I knew we could make great art, and the SCUMM engine was working brilliantly at

"I love Disneyland a lot, and even worked there one summer, so I was a huge fan of the Pirates of the Caribbean *ride; Monkey Island felt to me like a funny interactive version of that ride."*

WILLIAM TILLER INTERVIEW

▲ The animated introduction to *The Curse of Monkey Island*.

▲ Not for the first time, Guybrush visits the voodoo lady in *The Curse of Monkey Island*.

▲ Temple from the opening scenes of *Ghost Pirates of Vooju Island*.

▲ A scene from the *Monkey Island*-inspired *Duke Grabowski: Mighty Swashbuckler!*

WILLIAM TILLER INTERVIEW

that time. A rough version of the game had already been made using temp art from *Full Throttle* so that I could play it from day one of pre-production. The dialogue and jokes were funny even back then, and they just kept getting better as production went along. So I and the rest of the team and I were supremely confident we were making a great game. There was some negative feedback from people who didn't want us to make the game without Ron, and that it was heresy, but I didn't look at it that way. I looked at it as Ron creating a great IP with the first two games, and now it was going to be carried on in the same spirit with guys from the same company and lineage. To me, it was like how Stan Lee created all these great superhero characters, but he didn't write all the comic books, or write the scripts for all the movies; other creative artists expanded upon his creation and added to the mythology of the characters. We had that same attitude about *The Curse of Monkey Island*, and our goal was to keep the spirit of the first games but add to it and expand upon it with new ideas. Once the game came out, almost all of those negative comments went away – though there are always some hardcore holdouts, just like there is with any beloved franchise when it's passed on to a new generation.

"Sean Clark took over Full Throttle 2 *and named it* Hell on Wheels. *I'm not sure what happened, but management didn't like where that game was headed either and cancelled it."*

Can you explain how you arrived at the chosen graphic style?
I loved the look of *Monkey Island 2*, so I was happy just to do my version of that, but Larry wanted a more avant-garde and original look. He liked how exaggerated the art was in a lot of political cartoons and wanted to go in that direction, but Jonathan wanted to go with a more traditional Disney animated movie look like in the *Little Mermaid* or *Peter Pan*. I tried to accommodate them both. I drew my inspiration from Dr. Seuss and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the latter of which was art-directed by Australian illustrator Dean Taylor. Luck would have it that one of my best friends was an assistant director on that movie and, because it was made in San Francisco, I got to see it during production. I used the exaggerated shapes of that art style and combined it with the colour and paint style of N.C. Wyeth, and tried to emulate the pencil-line work of illustrator Peter de Sève. I wanted to make a lot of visual callbacks to the first two games and put in elements from them throughout the game to make it feel part of the same world.

"While working on games like The Dig *and* Monkey Island *I started coming up with my own ideas and* A Vampyre Story *was one of them; I also had ideas for* Monkey Island *sequels which ended up in* Ghost Pirates."

Is it true that you were involved in the unreleased *Full Throttle* sequel?
That was a lot of fun and ended in disappointment and frustration. Two things happened that got me involved in *Full Throttle 2*. First, Tim Schafer had left the company to make the excellent *Psychonauts* and form Double Fine, and Simon Jeffrey took over as president of LucasArts. I guess a *Full Throttle* sequel was the most requested by fans. Simon was convinced the game should be made and thought since Larry Ahern had helped design and was the lead animator for the first game that he should lead the sequel. I was going to art-direct it; I'd just art-directed a 3D action game in the form of *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*. We started on the game and production design, but the new development lead didn't agree with the direction of the story and wanted a new writer to take over. We didn't agree with his assessments, and we decided it was time to part ways; Larry went to Microsoft, and I went to Stormfront to work on the *Lord of the Rings* movie game. Sean Clark took over *Full Throttle 2* and named it *Hell on Wheels*. I'm not sure what happened, but management didn't like where that game was headed either and cancelled it. Hopefully, Tim will do a sequel, though they would have to get a new actor to voice Ben – which would be hard to because the original actor, the late Roy Conrad, was so good.

You left LucasArts at the turn of the new millennium. Why was that?
Larry Ahern and I had been working on pre-production on *Full Throttle 2: Payback!*, but we didn't see eye-to-eye with management on how it was going. They liked the art but thought the story needed a new writer. Larry and I didn't agree and felt that after nine years it was time to explore the world outside LucasArts. It was my first job and I'd never worked anywhere else, so I wanted to try a new experience and environment. In some ways, I wish I'd stayed, but I think it was still the right decision. LucasArts had a great culture, great benefits and people, but it had flaws too, like the antiquated project leader hierarchy system and the over-reliance on Lucasfilm IPs. Don't get me wrong, I love *Indy* and *Star Wars*, but original game IPs were hardly ever getting greenlit by that point. Plus, the *Star Wars* movie prequels that a lot of these games were based on just stank, badly. It was tough on morale. I'm thrilled Disney bought *Star Wars* and *Indy* and loved the new movies a lot. I think Disney is going in the right direction with the franchise.

You then developed your own point-and-click adventure games, such as *A Vampyre Story*, *Ghost Pirates of Vooju Island*, and *Duke Grabowski: Mighty Swashbuckler*. Were these inspired by your time at LucasArts and experience in the genre?
Yes, absolutely. While working on games like *The Dig* and *Monkey Island* I started coming up with my own ideas and *A Vampyre Story* was one of them; I also had ideas for *Monkey Island* sequels which ended up in *Ghost Pirates*. *Duke* was an idea I had for a demo for a Unity add-on that I liked so much I made it into a full game.

I think the style of *Full Throttle*'s interface was perfect, and we used it again in *Curse of Monkey Island*. The *Grim Fandango* UI I felt was too restrictive and a bit clunky, though it was imaginative, clever and kept the screen clear of any interface art. But I like the illustrative look of 2D backgrounds with the advantages of 3D character models and animation, just like what *Grim Fandango* offered. I liked the art style I did for *Curse of Monkey Island*, so I just stuck with it when I made my own games. Some say I was trying to capture the feel of the early LucasArts games, but really I just liked how that looked and how that interface worked. If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

1997

Riven: The Sequel to Myst

Despite four years in development, *Riven* offers very similar gameplay, controls, and visual presentation to its predecessor. As before, the game world consists of pre-rendered static screens, each of which has a 'hot spot', that can be clicked on. Critics remained wowed by the visuals, with some proclaiming that the game feels more like a visual novel than a computer game. As with *Myst*, *Riven* is a puzzle-heavy affair where solutions involve manipulating complex machines rather than using inventory items.

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1998

Grim Fandango

On paper, mixing Mexican folklore with film noir traits and Art Deco architecture sounds disastrous, but the combination led to the creation of a masterpiece in *Grim Fandango*. With polygonal characters inhabiting pre-rendered 3D environments, LucasArts abandoned SCUMM and debuted its new GrimE engine. The traditional mouse interaction method was also replaced with keyboard control for movements and actions. However, the developer's humour, inventory puzzles and epic storytelling endure, as we follow Manny Calavera's four-year journey through the afterlife.

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1998

▲ The demon Glottis (left) and ruthless travel agent Domino Hurley (right) – just two of the 50 characters in *Grim Fandango Manny will meet*, each one made using around 250 polygons.

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1999

Clock Tower II: The Struggle Within
Developed in Japan exclusively for the Sony PlayStation, *Clock Tower II* is a point-and-click game with survival horror elements. Despite the title, it's actually the third game in the series after its debut on the Super Famicom in 1995. For control, the player can use either the host PlayStation controller or mouse cursor to guide Alyssa Hale through various nightmarish environments. After solving a mixture of environmental and inventory-based puzzles, one of 13 possible endings is revealed.

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Oliver Franzke

With the advent of smartphones, LucasArts decided to leverage its past by remastering some of its classic point-and-click adventures. Oliver Franzke worked on these titles and would later join Double Fine, the studio founded by former LucasArts legend Tim Schafer.

Have you always been a fan of point-and-click adventure games? If so, what are your favourites?
Absolutely. Point-and-click adventure games were among my first experiences with video games and the fascination for the genre hasn't left me since then. I'm a big fan of the classic LucasArts adventure games and to this day I replay them occasionally. If I had to pick a favourite then it would be *The Secret of Monkey Island*, closely followed by *Sam & Max Hit the Road*.

Can you tell us how you came to work on the special editions of *The Secret of Monkey Island* and *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*?
I was hired into a newly assembled 'all-star' team that was supposed to work on a big AAA game, but, only a few months after I joined the company, management changed and our project was cancelled. Since everyone on the team had fond memories of the old LucasArts adventure games we decided to make the best of the situation by getting *The Secret of Monkey Island* to work on the iPhone, which was brand-new at that time. While we loved the charm of the pixelated graphics we agreed that it would prevent us from making *Monkey Island* appeal to players who didn't grow up with the original version, which is a shame since the puzzles, writing and, of course, the humour were still top of the class. It was important to us to keep the game unchanged but we started to think about how to give it a new coat of paint. Our initial tests were promising and they helped us to convince the new management to turn this skunkworks project into a full production. The funny thing is that before I moved to San Francisco I remember telling my friends that my goal was to make LucasArts make adventure games again. In a way this became reality, and I still can't believe it.

Were you apprehensive about working with these classic games?
Not at all. In fact, being able to work with the source code of my all-time favourite game was a dream come true. The other thing to bear in mind is that there were essentially no remasters at that time, so we really didn't know what to expect. We were just a group of people who loved playing *Monkey Island* when we were young and wanted to make this great game accessible to as many folks as possible.

Was it important to you to be able to switch to the 'classic graphics' mode?
This feature came out of a random conversation within the programming team. Someone said, "Wouldn't it be cool if you could just switch between the Special Edition and the original version." I thought that was a brilliant idea and started to implement a prototype right away. Seeing this work for the first time was a truly magical moment and it just shows that sometimes the smallest feature can have huge impact on the success of a game.

What tweaks and improvements were you able to add thanks to the modern technology?
When the original game was first released, hardware limitations didn't allow for full-screen animations and as a result the backgrounds often felt too static, so our main goal was to make the world feel livelier. Using programmable graphics cards, we were able to add waves to the ocean, moving clouds, twinkling stars and crackling fires. We also were able to support fully recorded music and, most importantly, we added voice output to all the characters.

Which aspects of both special edition *Monkey Island* games are you most proud of?
First and foremost I'm proud of the team and that we were able to turn the misfortune of unexpected layoffs into a very successful passion project. In terms of my personal contributions to the special editions, I'm quite proud of all the subtle visual effects we added to the game. For example, when Guybrush is near a fire you can see the flickering light reflecting on his arms and legs. I'm also quite happy with LeChuck's ghostly aura in *The Secret of Monkey Island*: *Special Edition*.

"We were just a group of people who loved playing Monkey Island *when we were young and wanted to make this great game accessible to as many folks as possible."*

After leaving LucasArts you went on to work for Double Fine. How did this come about?
Sadly, LucasArts remained a pretty unstable working environment even after the new management took over. After *LeChuck's Revenge* was done I felt exhausted by the constant rollercoaster ride. A friend of mine was working at Double Fine at the time and asked me if I wanted to visit the company, and so I did. I loved that everyone at Double Fine was incredibly friendly and very passionate about what they were working on, and so one thing led to another and before I knew it I was interviewing for a job with one of my game development heroes, Tim Schafer. A few weeks later I joined the company.

OLIVER FRANZKE INTERVIEW

At Double Fine you worked on modern adventure games such as *The Cave* by Ron Gilbert. How was that experience?
Working on *The Cave* was a great experience. As a LucasArts adventure buff I was a big fan of Ron's work, and so I was thrilled to learn that he was making a brand-new game at Double Fine. Since I only helped out on the project for a few months I didn't have a lot of interactions with him, but it was fascinating to see his process and, of course, Ron's dry humour is hilarious to witness in real life.

You were also heavily involved with *Broken Age*. What was your role in the development?
I was the lead programmer and my main responsibility was to make sure that the other departments – gameplay, art, animation, audio – had everything they needed to make a great game. In addition to that, it was my job to ensure that *Broken Age* ran well on the different platforms we wanted to release the game on.

What was it like working directly with Tim Schafer?
To this day I can't believe that I actually worked on a brand-new point-and-click adventure game with Tim. If someone had told me this in my teenage years I'd have laughed and dismissed it as a joke. *Broken Age* was the first Tim-led game at Double Fine I worked on, and like with Ron on *The Cave* it was a very interesting to experience Tim's approach to game development first-hand. Working with Tim was an absolute dream. Not only is he incredibly funny and just the nicest guy you'll ever meet, but he is also a magnificent writer and a master of puzzle design. Of course, this is the reason why his LucasArts adventure games are cult classics, but it was still incredible to witness this directly.

Do you think *Broken Age* managed to capture the spirit of the old LucasArts titles?
I think so, yes. To me, the essence of the classic LucasArts adventure games is the combination of interesting and challenging puzzles set in a fascinating and beautiful world full of great characters. In my opinion, *Broken Age* delivers in all of these categories and I'm very proud of what we achieved with the game.

You then got the opportunity to work on remasters of *Day of the Tentacle*, *Full Throttle* and *Grim Fandango*. Did you jump at the chance to be involved?
Yeah, absolutely. As a fan of the classic LucasArts adventure games I volunteered myself as soon as I heard about the projects. Like with the *Monkey Island* special editions, it was a lot of fun to dive into the original SCUMM code to figure out how these games were made back in the day and how to add the new high-fidelity art and sounds. Each remaster had a different challenge, so there was always something interesting to work on. For *Grim Fandango* we had to figure out how to convert the early-day low-resolution 3D graphics into something that looks good on modern GPUs. *Day of the Tentacle*, on the other hand, used lots of big sprites due to the animation style, and *Full Throttle* made extensive use of FMV for cutscenes and gameplay.

Did you have any access to the original art, code and assets to aid development?
All of the remasters – including the *Monkey Island* special editions – use the original code under the hood. As far as the game is concerned, it's still running on a PC in the '90s. The new graphics and sounds are layered on top using the game engine we developed for *The Secret of Monkey Island: Special Edition*, which is jokingly called the 'Remonkeyed Engine'. While finding the original code in the archives was no problem, we weren't as lucky with the artwork. Often we didn't find all the source files and sometimes we found multiple versions of the same piece that were all different. To make things even more complicated, these files were stored in formats that aren't supported by modern tools such as Photoshop. Because of this, we decided to use the final art that came with the game as a starting point. In other words, we extracted all of the backgrounds and characters out of the game. Our artists then painted over the original version at a much higher resolution. This way we were able to guarantee a one-to-one match between the original and the remastered version.

▲ Remastered scenes from *The Secret of Monkey Island* (left) and *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* (middle and right).

▲ Other LucasArts titles to be remastered include *Day of the Tentacle*, *Full Throttle* and *Grim Fandango*.

1999

The Longest Journey

Developed by Norwegian studio Funcom, *The Longest Journey* follows many '90s gaming trends: elaborate pre-rendered 3D environments (reminiscent of those seen in *Resident Evil* games) and a female protagonist who was marketed as an alternative to Lara Croft. But underneath the impressive visuals are familiar point-and-click mechanics and a story which focuses on shifting parallel worlds, which is advanced by solving inventory-based puzzles and completing multiple-choice conversations.

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2000

Daria's Inferno

Based on MTV's adult animated sitcom, created by Glenn Eichler and Susie Lewis Lynn, this inventory-based puzzle game offers the same sardonic humour and voice actors as fans of the TV show are accustomed to. Viewed from an isometric perspective, the player must help Daria Morgendorffer find five lost items in order to escape her own nightmare version of Dante's Inferno. The art style matches the animated TV show and is bright, colourful and well animated throughout.

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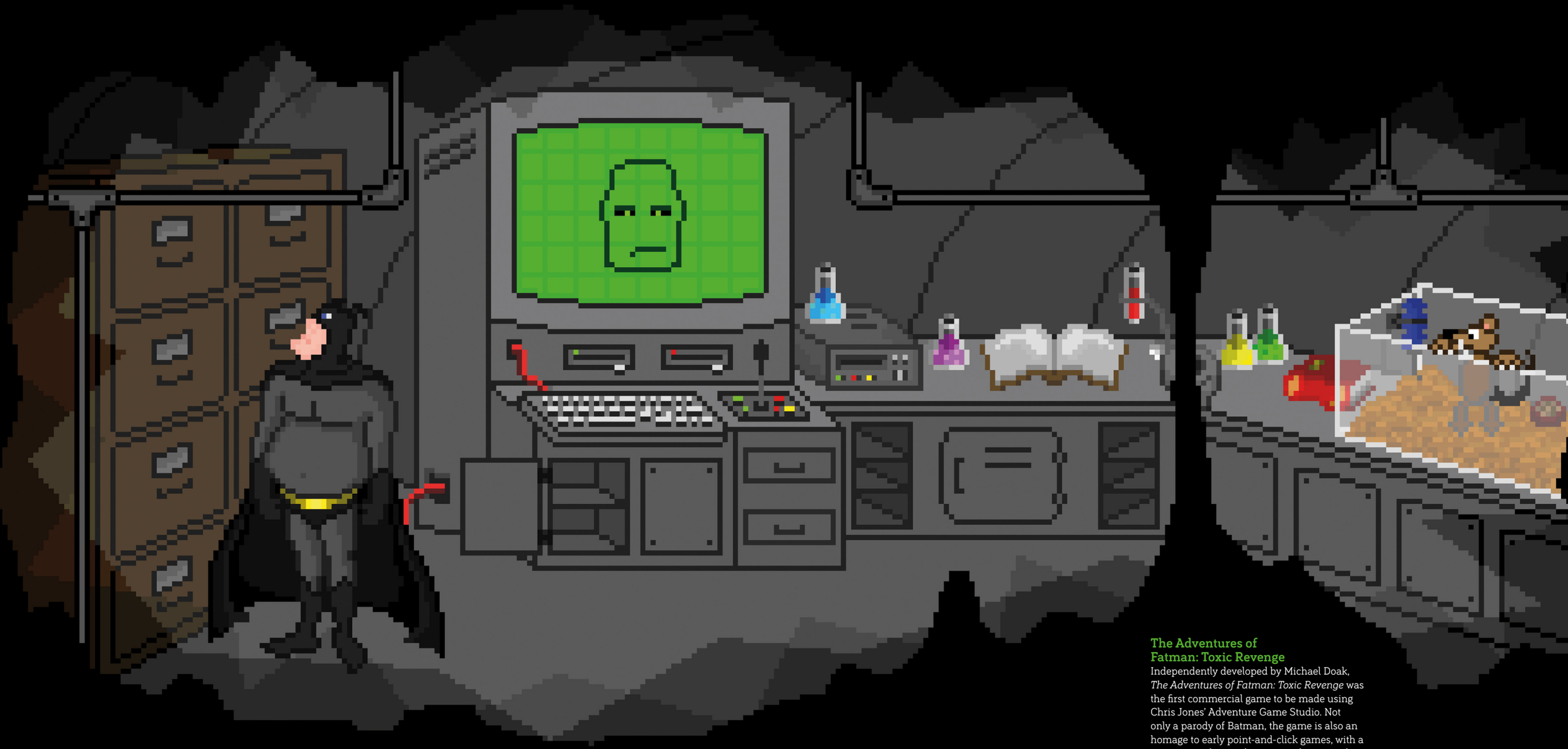
2001

Runaway: A Road Adventure

By 2001, big developers had turned their backs on the point-and-click genre, which created an opportunity for smaller independents – like Pendulo Studios – to explore their own ideas. With a plot that involves helping a car crash victim flee from the Mafia, the first *Runaway* game in the series proved that the genre still had the capacity to tell new stories. *Runaway: A Road Adventure* was praised for its visuals, detailed cartoon environments and believable cel-shaded characters.

192

2003



The Adventures of Fatman: Toxic Revenge

Independently developed by Michael Doak, *The Adventures of Fatman: Toxic Revenge* was the first commercial game to be made using Chris Jones' Adventure Game Studio. Not only a parody of Batman, the game is also an homage to early point-and-click games, with a naive yet endearing hero, surreal post-modern humour, and a simple streamlined command icon interface. The graphics are refreshingly 2D, made from pixels in an era dominated by realistic 3D visuals.

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2003

The Black Mirror

The large, imposing Black Mirror Manor asylum and the town of Willow Creek make an ominous backdrop to this truly dark, gripping game. Originally called *Posel Smrti*, which in Czech means 'Death's Messenger', Future Games' horror adventure was praised for its realistic graphics and unparalleled atmosphere. Despite being made by a small team, it contains 150 locations and five hours of spoken dialogue, divided into six chapters.

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2005

Bone: Out from Boneville

Founded by LucasArts alumni, Telltale Games is generally acknowledged as the company that helped rejuvenated mass interest in the point-and-click genre. *Bone: Out from Boneville* was designed by another ex-LucasArts employee, Dave Grossman, and based on the comic series by Jeff Smith. This was Telltale's first episodic adventure game series and used traditional mouse point-and-click control in 3D environments spanning five, two-hour games.

195

The Shivah

The Shivah was designed and developed by Dave Gilbert (who later went on to form Wadjet Eye Games) in just one month. Unusually it explores themes related to the Jewish faith, with Rabbi Russell Stone its protagonist. In a game without inventory puzzles, to solve a murder Stone needs to talk to witnesses and meticulously study sources of information, such as a Yiddish dictionary. The player is limited to two actions – look and interact – which are mapped to the mouse buttons. *The Shivah* was re-released 2013 and featured new graphics, new music and re-recorded speech.

2006

196

Sam & Max: Episode 6 - Bright Side of the Moon

After a cancelled sequel, the most famous animal detective double-act in the point-and-click genre finally made a comeback thanks to Telltale Games. Created with the involvement of original creator, Steve Purcell, three series of six episodes take the Freelance Police across time and space to solve a number of ludicrous cases. Although presented entirely in 3D, they play very similarly to the original *Sam & Max Hit the Road*.

2008

A Vampyre Story

Having been turned into an undead vampire, Parisian opera student Mona De Lafitte attempts to escape from captivity in a Draxsylvanian castle. Designed by former LucasArts artist William Tiller, *A Vampyre Story* harks back to the classic games of the genre. Mona's actions all come from a pop-up menu, and as she explores the beautiful environments she talks to people and creatures, while, of course, picking up every item in sight. The look of this superbly stylised, morbidly humorous, point-and-click adventure was inspired by Edward Gorey illustrations.

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Goin' Downtown

This futuristic sci-fi murder mystery features locations that look like hand-drawn comic panels populated with impressive cel-shaded characters. For English speakers the game's German dialogue is also shown as speech bubbles, which actually reinforces the feeling that you're interacting with a darkly gritty graphic novel. Like most modern PC-based point-and-clicks, a context-sensitive cursor enables you to explore, with a right-click for examining an item and a left-click for interacting.

2008

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2009

Ghost Pirates of Vooju Island
Created by LucasArts alumnus William Tiller, comparisons with *The Curse of Monkey Island* series were inevitable. Unsurprisingly, it follows point-and-click traditions, with a coin-style menu that'll be familiar to anyone who played Guybrush's last 2D adventure. The imaginative backgrounds are simply gorgeous. Painted in Photoshop, they make great use of depth and perspective, giving *Ghost Pirates of Vooju Island* a grandiose sense of scale, which belie its minuscule budget.

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2009

The Secret of Monkey Island: Special Edition

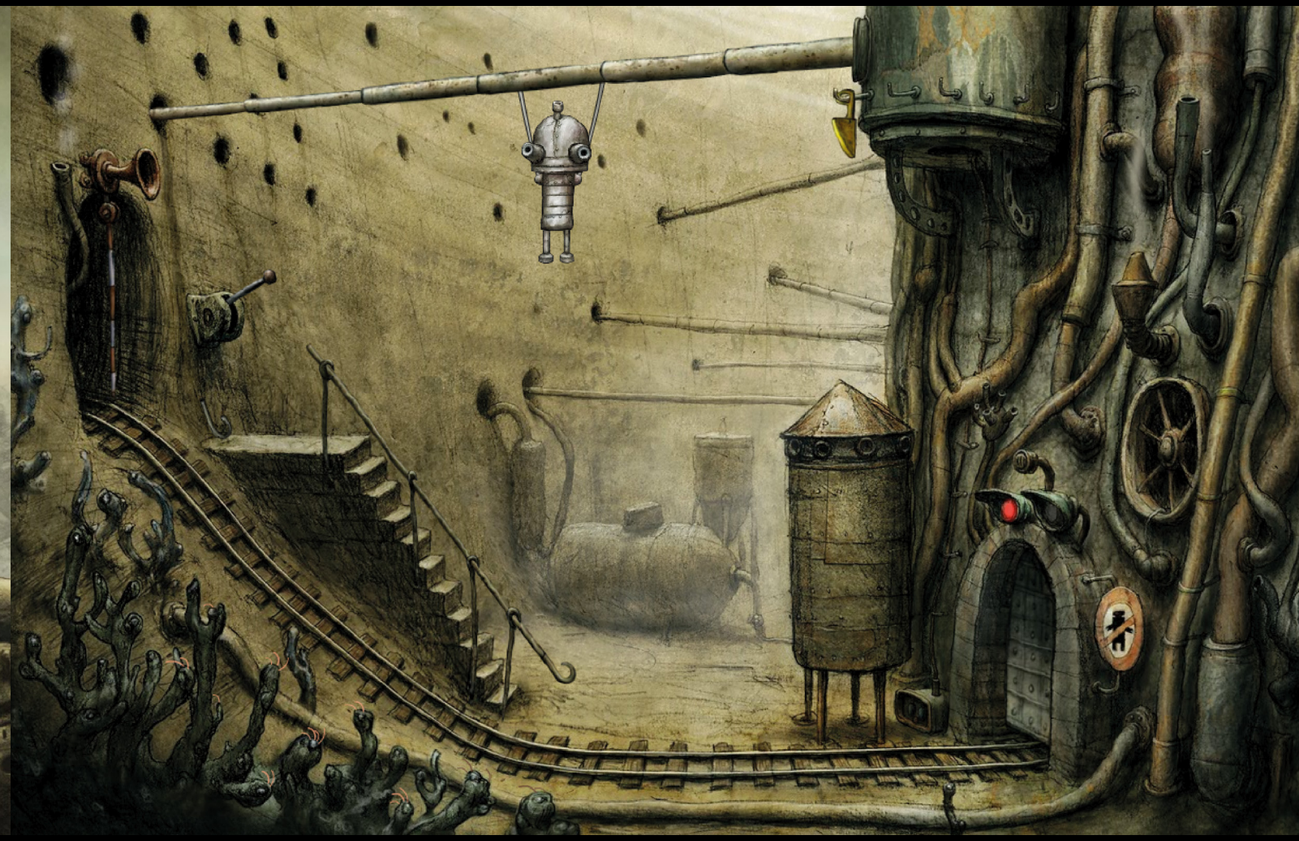
For this enhanced version of *The Secret of Monkey Island*, thought was given to the demands of modern gamers, with the inclusion of an orchestral music score, full voice-overs, an in-game hint system and auto-save. The graphics have been completely overhauled and replaced with hand-drawn artwork, which is displayed fullscreen as the verbs for actions and the item inventory are now hidden. At any time while playing, you can switch between the original game and the enhanced version.

201

Machinarium

In a surrealist, decaying mechanical world, a small robot endeavours to avenge his lost love. Across a number of incredibly detailed hand-drawn screens, the player is set a wide array of increasingly taxing puzzles. The gameplay features no dialogue; character comments are instead replaced by animated pictorial speech bubbles, which work really well. The entire self-financed game was created by just seven Czech developers over three years.

2009



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Jakub Dvorský

Based in the Czech Republic, Amanita Design made its debut with the 2003 point-and-click adventure *Samorost*, which was followed by an equally well-received sequel in 2005. Amanita has done work for clients such as the BBC and Nike, but it is 2009's *Machinarium* – another entry in the point-and-click genre – which is perhaps its most famous and enduring creation, having been ported to a wide range of systems and platforms. *CHUCHEL* is the studio's latest adventure. We spoke to Amanita's Jakub Dvorský about the studio's connection with the point-and-click genre.

Did you play many classic point-and-click adventure games? If so, which are your favourites?
Yes, I did play many adventure games during my childhood. It began in the '80s with text-based games from Czech bedroom developers, and later I managed to get some cool graphical games from abroad. *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Gobliiins*, *Myst*, *Discworld* or *The Neverhood*... It's a small sample of games which I loved and which influenced me as a game designer.

What do you love so much about the point-and-click genre?
I love the worlds, characters and stories which are deeper and more interesting than in other genres where the narration is not so important. And, of course, the graphics. Especially in the '90s, the best graphics were always in adventure games. On the other hand, I wasn't fan of lengthy text dialogues and I'm not even today; I love reading books, but when I play a game I want to be immersed in its world and interact with it, play it. Reading long passages of text in a game has always bored me.

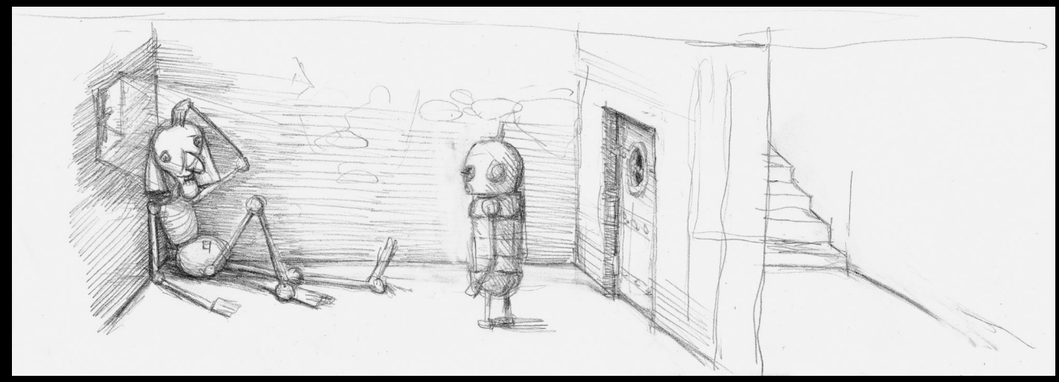
How did the concept of *Machinarium* develop, and what titles inspired it?
It grew from our previous smaller games, like *Samorost* and *Samorost 2*, but it was also a more traditional point-and-click game with an inventory and so on. It was inspired by classics of the genre like *Monkey Island* and *Myst*, but also by several animated movies, such as the Czech puppet series *Potkali se u Kolina* by Bretislav Pojar. It's about two bear brothers who play with each other and who can transform into almost anything. The initial idea for *Machinarium* was similar; the main hero was supposed to be able to transform into various other things, like a locomotive, washing machine and so on. Then we realised that it was far too ambitious, and made the game simpler. Besides that, a lot of inspiration came directly from nature and the world around us – the old rusty machines, abandoned factories and industrial buildings, for example.

Can you tell us about the development process of *Machinarium*?
First, we needed a rough concept for the world – the basic storyline, the main character and, of course, the game mechanic. With those things in mind, we started to gather a huge amount of smaller assorted ideas and sketches for puzzles, other characters, environments, situations, detailed pieces of the story and also the background of the world in which the game would take place. After some time we already had a better picture what it was all about and so the whole story could be written – still in a rough and unfinished form – and we also started to design all the locations with final puzzles. We made rough sketches of each location and wrote down all the functionality and other ideas, and these files served us as design documents which we used when making actual art assets, animation and functionality.

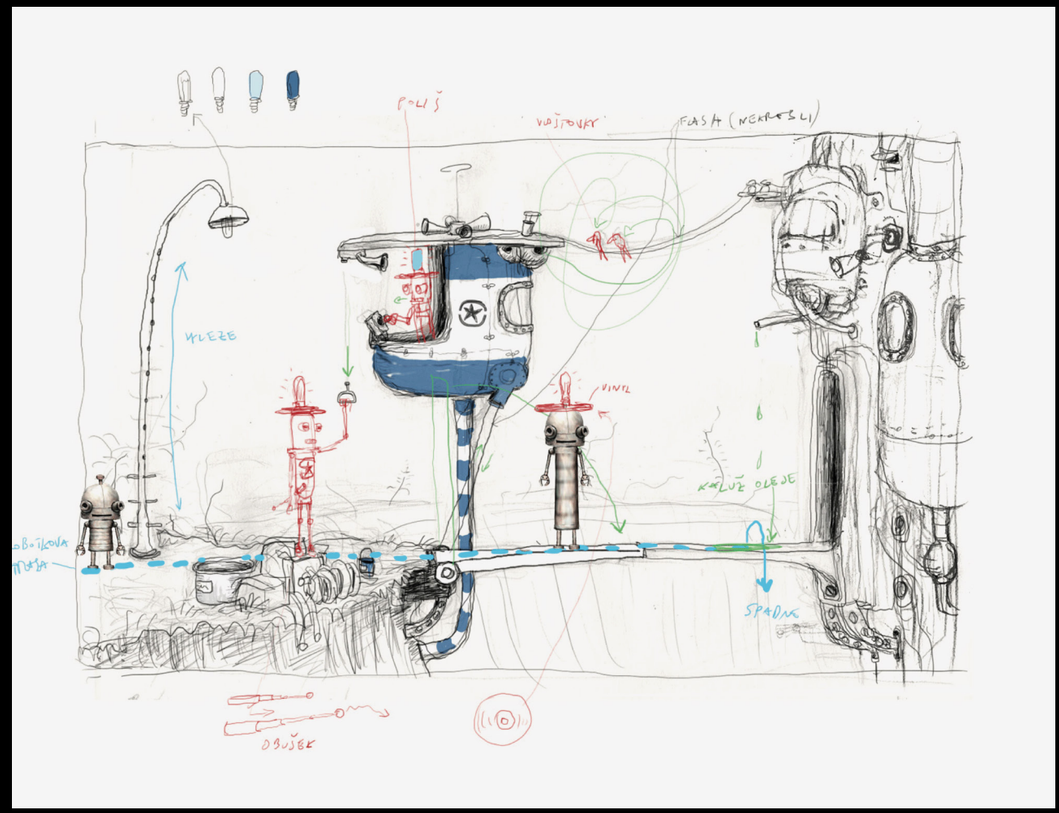
The art style is very detailed and distinctive. What inspired this style?
It's an evolution and combination of various things. Firstly, it's my design which is painted by my colleague Adolf Lachman. The whole process was a constant discussion between us and also with our animator, Vaclav Blín. Some inspiration could be found in older Czech and Eastern European animated movies and book illustrations. All the artists in Amanita Design grew up watching the same films and reading the same books, and these influenced us a lot. We hope to be seen to be continuing the great tradition of Czech animation.

"A lot of inspiration comes directly from nature and the world around us – the old rusty machines, abandoned factories and industrial buildings, for example."

What's the process for creating the art?
To invent and create the final look of the game was quite a long process. At the beginning we knew we needed a slightly different look from our previous games – which is already very different from most other, current games – and match everything thematically with this world of rusty robots. We felt we needed something warm with a visible human touch in it to create a contrast to that robotic world, so we came up with the idea of hand-drawn backgrounds (pencil on paper), which were scanned and finished in the computer. Alongside colouring and shading we also used plenty of textures, which we collected in the real world.



▲ An early pencil sketch for *Machinarium* showing a scene in which Josef meets a robot prisoner. The inmate wants a cigarette and you're tasked with making one out of the objects available.



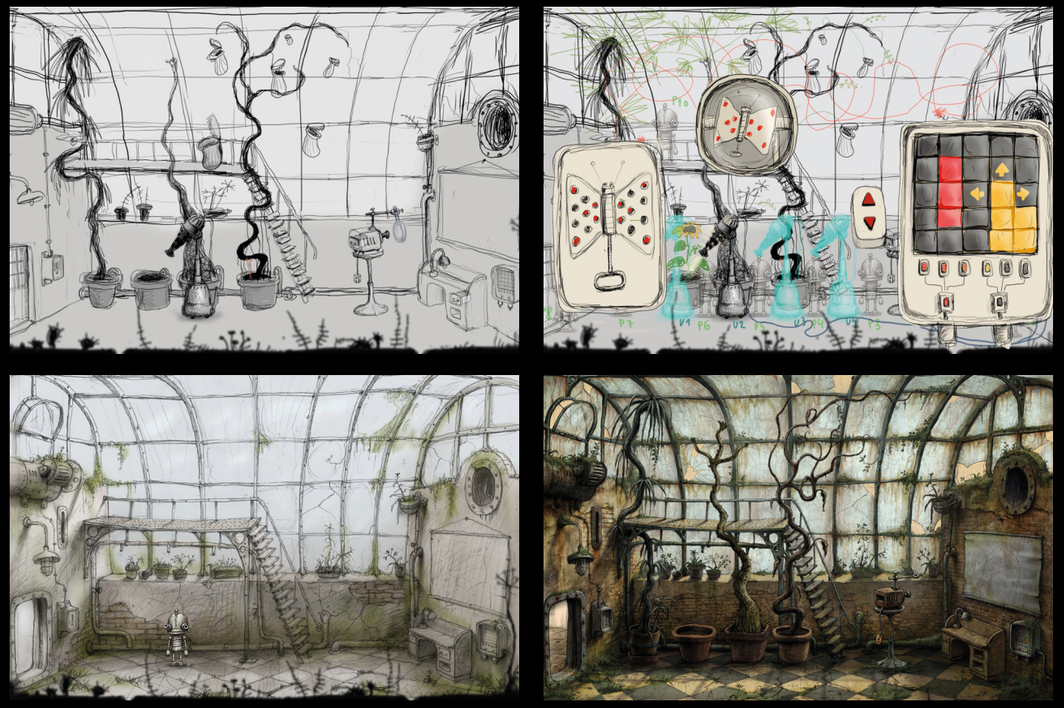
▲ A design document example from *Machinarium* for the scene in which Josef must get past the guard by creating a disguise. Routes and puzzles are drawn over the pencil-sketch with coloured pen.

Did you always know that you wanted to have no dialogue? Was this a challenge from a gameplay perspective?
Yes, that was always a very clear aim and there are several reasons for this decision. First, none of us are good writers. And, while it's a challenge to tell a story without any use of language, it also creates some kind of magic. We already knew non-verbal narrative techniques from older Czech and Eastern European animated movies, so it wasn't something what we would need to invent from scratch. And, of course, the other positive aspect of having hardly any text in our games is the ease of localisation and improved accessibility, even for people who can't read, such as younger children.

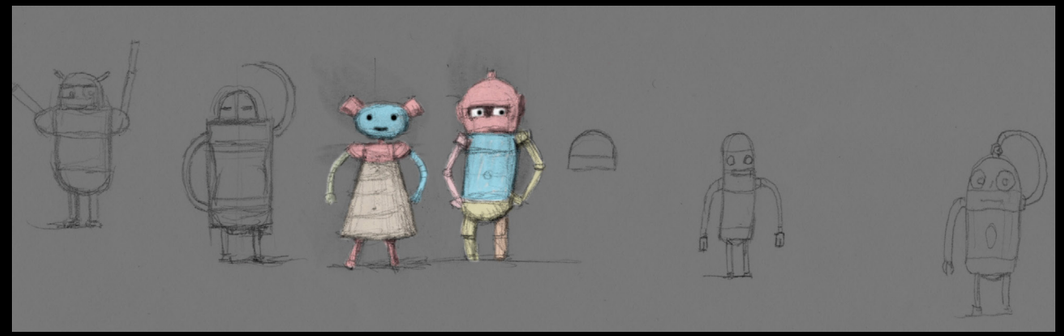
Do you find smart devices to be a perfect vehicle for these types of games?
Yes, of course. When we were making *Machinarium*, there were no tablets or bigger smartphones, but as soon as they appeared we knew we must port it because touch devices are just perfect for our games. When playing on these mobile devices you lose part of the immersion because the screens are smaller, but you gain the direct control with your finger; you are closer to the game's world and you can almost touch it.

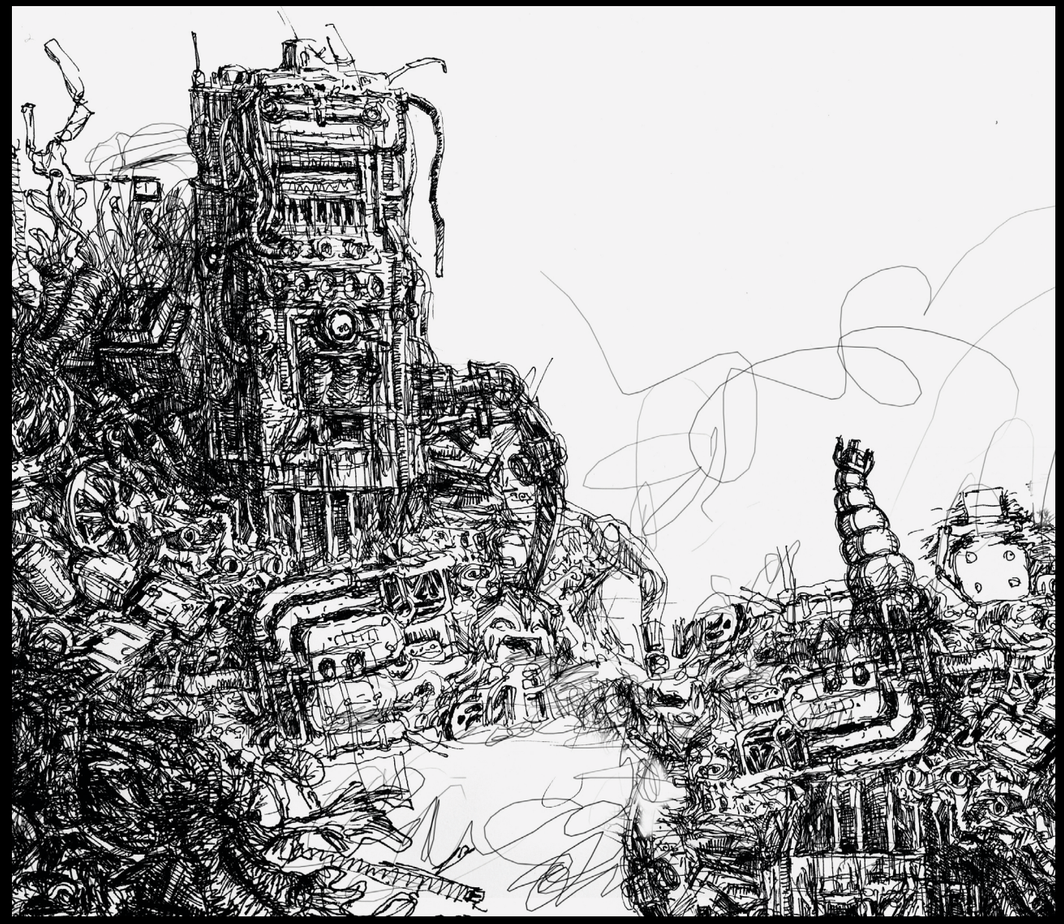
Looking back, what parts of *Machinarium* are you proud of?
I like the situations when the player is surprised. I think there are a few surprising moments in *Machinarium*, such as – and this is a spoiler to anyone who hasn't played it, I should point out – when the fan-robot gives you quiz questions and you must give him wrong answers to make him angry. When I secretly observed players at this situation, they usually laughed when they figured out the solution. I also like the subtle moments which are not important in the story or the gameplay but create a very delicate feeling which only some players really appreciate. For example, when the main character uses an elevator, you can't see any movement of the elevator because we see it only from inside, but the robot shrinks a little when the elevator goes up and stretches a bit for a while when he goes down. I love these little touches.

"We felt we needed something warm with a visible human touch in it to create a contrast to that robotic world, so we came up with the idea of hand-drawn backgrounds (pencil on paper), which were scanned and finished in the computer."



▲ A series of hand-drawn artwork showing the creation of the detailed Greenhouse scene in *Machinarium* – starting with a pencil drawing and finishing up in ink.





▲ Selection of hand-drawn concept art for *Machinarium. These include character pencil sketches and a detailed black ink drawing of the Scrap Yard.*

2009

Tales of Monkey Island: Chapter 1 - Launch of the Screaming Narwhal
Despite generally positive reviews, fans frequently call *Escape from Monkey Island* the worst in the series, largely due to it being in 3D. However, Telltale Games' episodic follow-up showed that Guybrush's pirate antics could find a home on consoles and portable devices, even with polygonal characters. Made in collaboration with LucasArts and the series' original designers, point-and-click controls were initially considered. However, direct control of the game's main character, combined with a 'click-and-drag' mouse system, was ultimately used to make for a more engaging player experience.

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The Whispered World

The adventures of 12-year-old clown, Sadwick, take him through more than 60 hand-drawn and animated 2D environments, each of which looks like a living fantasy painting. Starting life as graphic artist Marco Hüllen's graduation project, *The Whispered World* is a visual masterpiece inspired by the works of Hayao Miyazaki. After publishing issues, the project was eventually developed by serial point-and-click creators Daedalic Entertainment, and won a series of awards for its story, sound and graphics.

2009

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2010

A New Beginning

Divided into 11 chapters, this time-travel thriller plays like a classic point-and-click adventure, but sidesteps the genre's taste for comedy, and instead presents a story focused on fears of climate change. Cutscenes are presented like animated panels in a visual novel. However, it's the game's hand-painted backgrounds that deserve the most praise; subtle animated sections are brought to life with varied colour palettes and terrific use of light, making each location feel like a work of art.

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2010

Monkey Island 2 Special Edition: LeChuck's Revenge

Much like the enhanced version of *The Secret of Monkey Island*, this special edition of *Monkey Island 2* featured all-new graphics, full voice acting, an integrated hint system and new controls. It was a true celebration of the iconic original game and, fittingly, included an in-game commentary by Ron Gilbert, Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman. This became all the more poignant, given that this was the last adventure game released by LucasArts.

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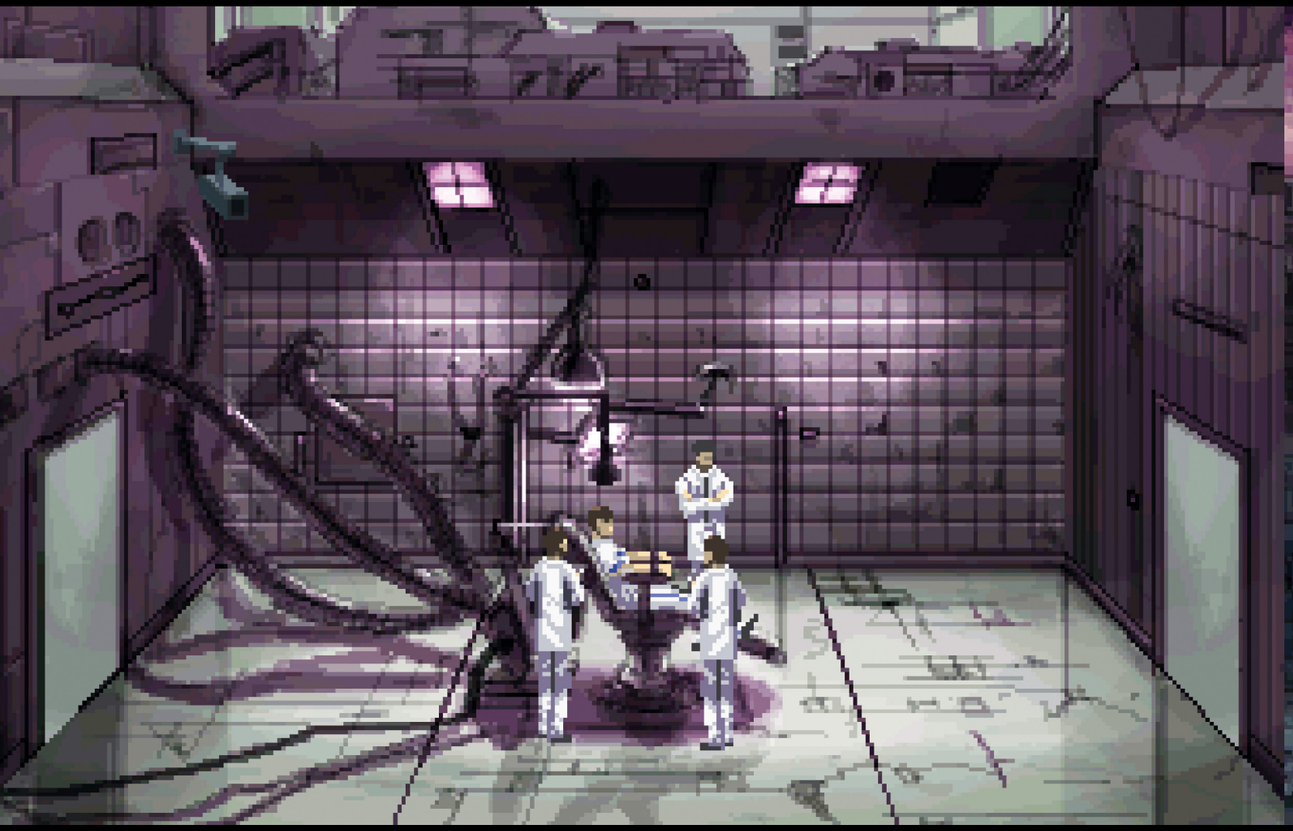
Gemini Rue

This cyberpunk graphic adventure was developed by Joshua Nuernberger under the guidance of Dave Gilbert. Frequently compared to *Beneath a Steel Sky*, this visually stunning and atmospheric game boasts 50 characters, 1,511 sprites and 80 rooms. *Gemini Rue* uses a point-and-click interface to interact with the environment, in order to solve puzzles and communicate with characters. But it's also a dangerous world, featuring sections of gunplay in which character death is a constant possibility.

2011



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Deponia

Developed by Daedalic Entertainment, *Deponia* takes place on a garbage planet and follows Rufus, a goofy protagonist who gets caught up in an equally goofy adventure. It offers wonderful hand-drawn 2D cartoony steampunk visuals with simple mouse controls. Filled with humour and romance, *Deponia* has clearly been made by a team schooled in classsic adventure point-and-clicks. True to the games that inspired it, the solutions to many puzzles tend to be what's most amusing rather than the most logical.

Resonance

After enjoying huge success with the *Blackwell* series, Wadjet Eye Games continued to publish titles that walk the fine line between exploring modern innovation and paying homage to the genre's roots. With low-res pixel art, *Resonance* looks and feels like a Sierra game, although it has fresh ideas, such as each character being able to store items within their memory. Stored items can then be used in conversations, as the player attempts to crack the game's many narrative mysteries.

2012

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2012

Botanicula

From the creators of *Machinarium*, this cerebral game follows a team of five tree creatures as they attempt to save their last remaining seed. Created in Adobe Flash, the game is controlled exclusively through single mouse clicks, and puzzles are solved through environment manipulation and by making use of the unique skills of your adorable organic party. The beautiful visuals and bizarre concept make *Botanicula* the perfect choice if you're after something a little different.

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The Walking Dead
Created using the versatile Telltale Tool game engine, the harsh, thick character outlines and blocks of colour echo the Robert Kirkman comics on which the game is based. Across five episodes, the player gets to witness the evolving relationship between Clementine and Lee as they cope with life during the zombie apocalypse. With few puzzles on offer, gameplay shifts to conversations, quick time events and decision making. As the game records and evolves to every choice made, the emotionally charged story feels unique to each player.

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2012

Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse
With funding for *Broken Sword 5* secured via Kickstarter, the team at Revolution were able to return to the series' roots and retain the features that made *Broken Sword* such a fan favourite. 2D visuals were reinstated, as were the classic mouse-driven controls, inventory system and conspiracy-filled narrative. Characters were modelled and animated in 3D, then rendered and turned into 2D artwork, saving the considerable time and effort it would have taken to draw and animate them using traditional methods.

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Kentucky Route Zero

At the heart of this stylish point-and-click adventure is a thought-provoking story about a trucker called Conway who meets many mysterious people as he travels along Route Zero. Interestingly, there are no puzzles to solve; instead the gameplay focuses on storytelling, atmosphere and text-based dialogue instead of the now-standard voice acting. As the game progresses, the player feels like a co-author, writing the enigmatic protagonist's backstory against a beautifully provocative silhouette art style.

2013

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Broken Age

When 87,142 backers pledged more than $3 million to make a point-and-click game, there was little doubt that the genre was less niche than many believed. Designed by LucasArts veteran Tim Schafer, *Broken Age* follows the intersecting stories of a boy in a spaceship and a girl in a fantasy world. While the cursor-driven gameplay adhered to the traditions of genre, the hand-painted backgrounds are modern and possess a dreamlike aesthetic.

Tim Schafer

One of the most influential people in the history of the point-and-click genre, Tim Schafer is the brains behind such eminent classics as *Full Throttle* and *Grim Fandango*, and co-created *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* and *Day of the Tentacle*. He parted ways with LucasArts in 2000 to establish Double Fine Productions, where he's overseen a string of cult hits that include *Psychonauts*, *Broken Age* and *Brütal Legend*.

Could you give us some background on how you came to work at Lucasfilm Games developing graphic adventures; had you played many adventure games before you joined the company?
To be honest, when I applied for the job at Lucas, I had been a big text adventure person all through high school. I played all the Infocom games, or most of them, and before that I played a lot of Scott Adams text adventures like *Savage Island* and *Voodoo Castle*. I loved text adventures – things like *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Deadline*, and the *Spellcasting* series. And when I was in college, working on Computer Science and Creative Writing, Lucas released *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken*. So I knew Lucas, but I wanted to work there because of their Atari games, like *Rescue on Fractalus!* and *Ballblazer*... Those were the games I was really excited about. I remember the disappointment in David Fox's voice one night when he called and I named all these games, besides the fact that I used the pirated name '*Ball Blaster*', which was pretty embarrassing. He said, "All those games are eight years old – have you played any of our games recently?" I was just in college and too busy to play games, and I realised how bad that sounded, so before I had the Lucas interview, I went to a little computer store and bought a copy of *Zak McKracken*, and played it all weekend. I was so poor after the interview that I went and returned the game for my money back. After I got the job they gave me a copy of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. After that, I became a lot more interested in graphic adventures, and, funnily enough, I ended up making them.

The first game you worked on was *The Secret of Monkey Island*, which went on to become one of the most recognisable and well-loved adventures of all time. How did you end up working on it?
When I started, we were there for a few months doing what they called SCUMM University, learning how to use the features [of the SCUMM game engine Lucasfilm Games used to create its adventures]. We'd go to the offices, touring an office every day, learning one feature, and we'd write a bunch of dumb jokes using it. And then they picked Dave [Grossman] and me to be on *The Secret of Monkey Island*.

What do you remember of the development of that first *Monkey Island* game?
It was funny, because back then there wasn't a lot of planning or schedules that I was aware of. Our design [process] would just be, draw this, draw that, draw *Monkey Island*... Ron [Gilbert] would come upstairs and be like, hey, the artists are done with this now, and get that new art for High Street or Low Street or Mêlée Island, and whoever was available would go down and get it and wire it up. The artists had their [own] area to work in. Dave and I were upstairs, and downstairs was Steve Purcell, Mike Ebert and Martin Cameron, and Mark Ferrari who was never on site... he was kind of a mythical creature only Ron talked to. Mark did all the art for *Loom* and he did a lot of the art for *Monkey Island*, and it was just so fun to have this huge hub downstairs. Back then the artists would do everything – characters, animation, backgrounds – or at least Steve could. [For example] for Stan the Ship Salesman he'd say, "I'll do his arms waving in the air..." And he would just come up with something like that, and we'd laugh.

"When I started, we were there for a few months doing what they called SCUMM University."

One thing that people remember about that game are the large overhead maps of the various islands that you wandered around from location to location, which were very fitting for a game about pirates...
Those were fun. One of the first things we did was make those maps work in *Monkey Island*. Dave did a lot of that, but we had to sit there and figure out the offsets, figure out the small things – if this tree is in this position and they overlapped a bit, figuring out how they overlapped, and making it work so when you walked off one screen you were standing beneath that same tree. And Dave added trigonometry to SCUMM so he could make these perfectly spiralling buzzards fly into the screen. He was doing all that stuff, and I was working on the AI ship combat that got cut...

Another great visual feature of the game were the full-screen portraits of characters like Guybrush, Elaine, and the residents of the Scumm Bar, among others. Did you work on any of this art yourself?
Yeah, I think the *Indiana Jones* games did it, but I know *Loom* started it... And we wanted that too. [For the pirates in the Scumm Bar] we didn't have any art yet, so I took Cobb, the character from *Loom*, and put a little sailor hat on him, and I put the *Loom* button on it, and wrote the *Loom* joke, and later an artist came and kind of painted over and fancied it up a bit. But that was my own art there, I was very proud of it.

Regarding that Cobb character – it might have been during the conversions – one of the artists was upset with the management of the project, and upset to be working on the game, so he wrote 'Loom SUCKS' on the forehead of the character, and then he palette shifted the colours of the pixels to be the same colours as his forehead, so it was invisible. But he knew it was in there, so he knew *Loom* sucked. When we converted to the FM Towns [a Japanese PC], there was this one bug, where the palette would be wrong for a frame, and the words 'Loom SUCKS' would flash on the frame every time it loaded. It'd be like, "Did I just see a subliminal message?!"

Did you have any idea, when you were helping to create it, that you were working on something special?
I mean, of course that was exactly our plan... Well, actually, I don't know what Ron was thinking, but we weren't very aware of the outside world; we were just doing what we thought was fun and funny, and trying to make each other laugh. And we were just trying to keep the reviewers happy, and then we'd move on. It wasn't like you'd check out a [web]stream to see if your game's doing well. There wasn't that kind of feedback. So, not only did I not know it was going to be huge when we were working on it, I didn't even know if people liked it afterwards, because we were always comparing ourselves to Sierra. And we were always underselling compared to Sierra, or at least that's what management was always telling us...

***Monkey Island 2*, along with games like *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, were a further step forward for graphic adventures in terms of scope, size and visual fidelity. How much more intensive were the development processes of these games?**
Yeah, *Monkey 2* was the first time we did that... We'd just hired Peter Chan, and he scanned some stuff, and all the old-school artists like Steve, and especially Martin Cameron, were against the scanning because it looked really junky when we first did it. Even *Monkey 2*, to this day, has a sort of really noisy look to it, at least the first edition did, which we thought was cool at the time because it looked more like the artist's paintbrush strokes. So the first time Peter Chan came and he scanned a piece of art, and he touched it up, it did look pretty good. I remember Martin going, "Damn you, Peter Chan!"

Of course, they still needed the skill to paint with a mouse, which is like painting with a brick. But the stuff that they could do with it back then, just using Deluxe Paint 2... The work that Steve Purcell did was amazing. Actually, when Ron had moved on, I was kind of left to run the 256-colour conversion, and we were doing all this high-res art. Steve Purcell said, "It's just too many colours. I like working with 16 colours, what are you supposed to do with 256 colours?" But I remember one artist, Iain McCaig, would go around the office taking photos of people's

"We were always underselling compared to Sierra, or at least that's what management was always telling us..."

▲ Guybrush talking to Cobb from *Loom*, who cameoed in *The Secret of Monkey Island* sporting the iconic 'ASK ME ABOUT LOOM' badge.

faces, and, somehow, with the mouse he'd do what looked like a watercolour painting. I don't know if the special edition does this, but I wish it showed the VGA and EGA art for *Monkey Island*, because they're both works of art in their own right.

"We'd done these lovable losers like Bernard and Guybrush, who were always messing up and getting people mad at them, then pulling through at the last minute. And we wanted to have a character that was bigger and cooler than you, who could kick down a door… So that's where Ben came from."

***Day of The Tentacle* was another step forward in terms of graphics and animation for LucasArts, with larger animated characters, and a breathtaking cartoon-style intro. Were you inspired by traditional cell animators, such as Tex Avery and Chuck Jones?**
We were super inspired by Looney Tunes and Daffy Duck, but I'd say specifically Chuck Jones. [*Day of the Tentacle*] is the game where Peter Chan established his style. He wouldn't really paint each colour – he'd draw black-and-white markers, scan it in and paint over it with Deluxe Paint. The intro was done by Kyle Balda. Kyle was an intern, and he later went on to be an animation director on *Toy Story 2*, and co-directed the *Minions* movies. He just came in on an internship from CalArts, and he did that whole sequence. I actually got to meet Chuck Jones, and I was hoping he'd say something nice for the blurb on the front of the box, but he never said anything. He was like, "Why am I here, why am I doing this?!"

This period was a time of huge improvements in computer hardware. Was it difficult to keep up and push the technology with each game, taking advantage of the move from floppy to CD-ROM, more memory, higher resolution graphics and the like?
Yeah, we were on the cutting edge of making games look better in that period, and we were pushing… I remember, on *Monkey Island*, when I first wired up the cutscene, of LeChuck kidnapping Elaine, where Guybrush rushes down to the docks and sees the ship go sailing away. I put that art in, and it crawled and flickered, and the performance was horrible. And we pushed [that tech] to where I got to do a full-screen tentacle animation. Actually I tried to be smart, by basically using a still piece of art, but wiggling the tongues, and wiggling the eyeballs. If you look at the Edison family screaming [in *Day of the Tentacle*] very little is moving on the screen, but it looks like a full-screen animated sequence.

Vince Lee, who made *Rebel Assault*, developed this new technology with [data] compression that could keep in time and stream graphics off CD-ROM. And that's what we used when we developed *Full Throttle*. Instead of flying down a trench in an X-wing shooting TIE fighters, we thought, "If we just lower that trench so it's the curb on the side of the road, then we can be riding down the road on a motorcycle."

***Full Throttle* was your first adventure project as lead designer. What drew you to the biker genre, and what were the inspirations behind the game?**
We'd done these lovable losers like Bernard and Guybrush, who were always messing up and getting people mad at them, then pulling through at the last minute. And we wanted to have a character that was bigger and cooler than you, who could kick down a door… So that's where Ben came from. We were very inspired, obviously, by *The Road Warrior* [aka *Mad Max 2*]. Also, samurai movies like *Yojimbo*. Two of the biggest inspirations [visually] were Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* (for the backgrounds) and for the animation and characters, I think Larry [Ahern] would say *Aeon Flux*. There was a lot of adult animation going on in the '90s, on cable channels like MTV, and that's kind of the context for that. If you look at the backgrounds for *Hellboy*, there was a way that objects in the background disappeared into darkness and silhouette, without a lot of details… very minimal. And if you look at the pipes and the kickstand [on Ben's bike] you can see how everything disappears into black, which was truly inspired by Mike.

"It's important talking about 3D back then, because it looked so bad. It looked like people were screen-printing faces onto nylons and stretching them over cardboard boxes… It just looked horrible."

The development budgets of games like *Full Throttle*, which cost $1.5 million dollars, were huge for their time, particularly so for an adventure title…
Whereas *Monkey Island* was $200,000 I think, yeah. The two things that really blew our disk space and budgets were voice acting and 3D art. And as everything got more and more complicated, everything got more expensive. It felt like the games were super-easy to make up until *Day of the Tentacle*, and then after that it just went nuts…

For your last LucasArts game, *Grim Fandango*, you created one of the first 3D point-and-click adventures. What made you want to make the move into 3D from the traditional 2D animated adventure games you'd worked on previously?
The real inspiration for the *Grim Fandango* technique was a game called *BioForge*. Everyone was pushing us to do 3D because it was hot [at the time] rather like virtual reality is now. It's important talking about 3D back then, because it looked so bad. It looked like people were screen-printing faces onto nylons and stretching them over cardboard boxes… It just looked horrible. And then I was thinking about sculpture from the [Mexican] Day of the Dead: they don't model all the bones of the skeletons, they mould the plaster into a cylinder and they paint the skeletons on top of it. And, it was like, "Bingo!". That kind of folk art look actually helped us with the tech that we had available back then. We did the characters that way but we wanted the backgrounds to look pretty, so we rendered them like *BioForge* did. I loved how *BioForge* handled camera transitions, through the magic of tank controls. There's one sequence where you're walking through the basement and the camera cuts to a high shot, then it cuts to a low shot, and cuts to a side shot. And it's so dramatic – it's just… "Oh my God, my character's moving through all these camera angles." You couldn't do that with normal controls. That made me like their technique of pre-rendered backgrounds and real-time characters.

TIM SCHAFER INTERVIEW

▲ Peter Chan's backgrounds for *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* were the first at LucasArts to be painted and then digitally scanned.

▲ A shot from the animated introduction sequence to *Day of the Tentacle*, by then LucasArts intern Kyle Balda.

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Ben meets Maureen the mechanic in *Full Throttle*.

Manuel 'Manny' Calavera from *Grim Fandango*.

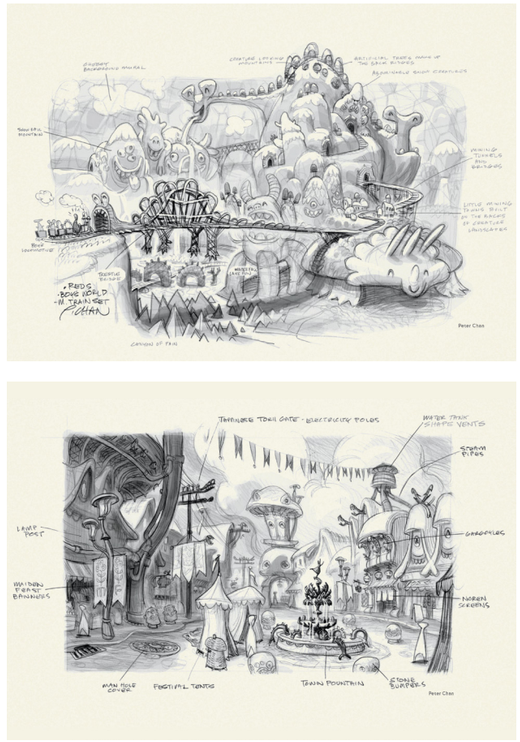
Day of the Tentacle Remastered's high-res redrawn graphics.

Vella with the talking tree in *Broken Age*.

"We went to the Skywalker Ranch archive, which has all the 35mm prints of Star Wars *and stuff… and next to it was this little palette of flat files that had all the marker drawings that Peter Chan and the other guys did."*

You're quoted as saying you were disappointed that *Grim Fandango* sold only 500,000 copies – significantly less than other LucasArts games – despite a budget of $3 million, and almost universal critical acclaim. Was that a reason for you moving on from the point-and-click genre?
Well, we took a break after *Grim*. And for me it wasn't just the sales of *Grim*, we just creatively wanted to try something else. I'd started playing T*omb Raider*, *Final Fantasy VII* and *Super Mario 64*, and I really loved the direct control [of the] characters. I wanted to explore that and have a game where you just ran a character around in a really tactile way. And that's why *Psychonauts* has a lot of adventure game elements to it.

Did you enjoy revisiting *Full Throttle*, *Day of the Tentacle* and *Grim Fandango* with your recent remastered versions for Double Fine? Is it gratifying that you were able to introduce those titles to a whole new generation of adventure fans?
I've always been a very anti-nostalgia person; I usually just make the games and walk away, and try to forget I made them so I can make something new. But I made a conscious decision to wallow in the nostalgia and learn from what would emerge from it. Those games were all made by a really specific set of people in a specific time, and it was really fun to think back on working with them again. I couldn't have made those games without the great artists, musicians and programmers [at LucasArts]. And those games were public works of art, yet they were standing in the street, being eaten away by acid rain and bird poop… You couldn't play *Grim Fandango* legally on a PC, you had to get it pirated or from eBay. So we took them and we polished them up, and we just made them suitable for public viewing again. And that was really gratifying because it just felt like catching something that was on the edge of deteriorating forever, you know? We went to the Skywalker Ranch archive, which has all the 35mm prints of *Star Wars* and stuff… and next to it was this little palette of flat files that had all the marker drawings that Peter Chan and the other guys did. The Steve Purcell drawings for *Monkey Island* were on that file. So we dug through it and we



A selection of Peter Chan's concept art for *Broken Age*.

scanned everything… We didn't know how much time we'd have, so it was like, "Quick, get everything!". There were magnetic tapes that had the source code on, and all this media was falling apart. It might have been the last time those tapes ever get read. And we were able to digitise everything and archive it. And so, just as an act of game preservation, it was really rewarding.

You famously returned to the adventure genre with *Broken Age*, after raising over $3 million on Kickstarter. Other games harking back to the golden age of LucasArts, like *Thimbleweed Park*, have also proved very popular. Why do you think there has been such a resurgence in point-and-click adventures, more than 25 years after you worked on *The Secret of Monkey Island*?
I think people just enjoy a good narrative, even if that's been taken over by a lot of different games now. But I think there's something you only get from a point-and-click adventure, and that's the sense of pacing – knowing that the game's not going to shoot you in the head if you sit there and think for a minute. There are things from the old days that people had gotten used to being exclusive to adventure games: the most beautiful art and the best narratives. The presentation was better in adventure games than any other genre, because I think we always had the best creative people, and the best artists. And also there's the way that, in adventures, a lot of it exists in your head. How the puzzles rely on your knowledge of the world, the characters and how they operate, and the way your brain has to evolve and grow and change as you play the game to solve the puzzles and advance the story. That's pretty special to adventures.

"But I think there's something you only get from a point-and-click adventure, and that's the sense of pacing – knowing that the game's not going to shoot you in the head if you sit there and think for a minute. There are things from the old days that people had gotten used to being exclusive to adventure games: the most beautiful art and the best narratives."

2015

Dropsy

Dropsy started out as a forum-based choose-your-own adventure, in which commentators would suggest how the narrative should unfold. Three campaigns on Kickstarter later, and the involvement of Devolver Digital enabled *Dropsy* to become a full-blown adventure game. This non-traditional take on the genre features detailed and colourful pixel art with a bizarre plot that sees you control Dropsy the clown. He talks to animals, hugs strangers and solves puzzles on a quest to clear his name following a fire at the circus.

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Jay Tholen

Dropsy began life as a forum post about a clown in 2008, before eventually evolving into a fully-fledged point-and-click adventure. Developed by Jay Tholen – also known as 'Tendershoot' – and studio A Jolly Corpse, *Dropsy* is one of the more unique modern takes on the genre. It uses 2D visuals which call to mind the classics of the '90s, but lacks any written dialogue, instead forcing players to communicate via a series of icons and images.

Did you play many classic point-and-click adventure games from the '90s?
As a child, I only had shareware or demo versions of adventure games, so I had to wait until much later to finish most of them. I have particularly fond memories of *Monkey Island 2*, *Full Throttle* and *Grim Fandango*. I also have amusing memories of *Hugo's House of Horrors*, namely the dining room bit in which they eat you, because it somehow profoundly unsettled me as a kid.

What do you love so much about the genre?
I enjoy adventure games because of their storytelling potential. Adventure game mechanics, at their best, make sense within the world and support the story that is being revealed. It's far easier to deliver a convincing and moving narrative when a player's primary interaction with the world isn't violence or destruction.

Which games or artists inspire you creatively?
Earthbound, *Fallout: New Vegas* and most of Nintendo's catalogue comes to mind first. I'm also hugely inspired by Brian Eno's creative philosophies. While most of his ideas come from his experiences with recording and composition, I find that they easily transfer to games. Ideologically, Fred Rogers utilised his creative interests in ways that genuinely helped people, and I'd love to do as good a job with my games.

How did the concept of *Dropsy* develop, and which titles inspired it?
Dropsy started as a choose-your-own-adventure forum game in 2008. I'd post a scene drawn up in Microsoft Paint, and then posters would reply with suggestions for the things *Dropsy* should do next. It became mildly popular, and in 2011 I started development on the full game. After a few slow years due to mental exhaustion from my day job, I ran a successful Kickstarter in 2013. A Jolly Corpse joined the project in 2014 as co-developers and, frankly, saved my butt. We released *Dropsy* a year later, in August 2015. *Dropsy* was inspired by LucasArts adventures, but many of our design choices were informed by *Dropsy*'s limited ability to communicate. To facilitate this, we developed a pictogram system that the characters use to talk to *Dropsy* and one another. This also meant that we didn't need to localise the game into other languages, which was a lovely unintended side effect.

Did you deliberately want to create a point-and-click that was different and stood out?
Regarding the kind-hearted nature of *Dropsy*, we wanted it to be different. Adventure game protagonists are often jerks and so it's nice to make something in which your character's goal is merely to make folks happy.

What was the inspiration for the art style?
There was some definite inspiration from the colour disciplines in Fauvist works, but the art for *Dropsy* was mostly created in a very unplanned, stream-of-consciousness way. For the backgrounds, I'd scan in rough pen sketches of the scenes, and then pixel over them. Some scenes took 20 hours to finish because I'd go back in and refine little details until they looked right. A few of the initial scenes – Dropsy's home, for example – were created using MS Paint, but I quickly switched to Aseprite as my pixel art program of choice.

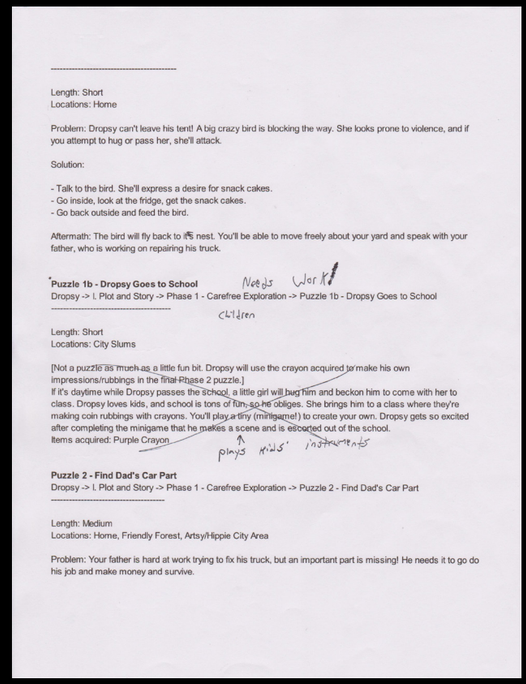
How long did development take?
The total development of *Dropsy* took a little over four years, though we effectively restarted using a new engine in late 2014. The programming and scripting were all done in 11 months.

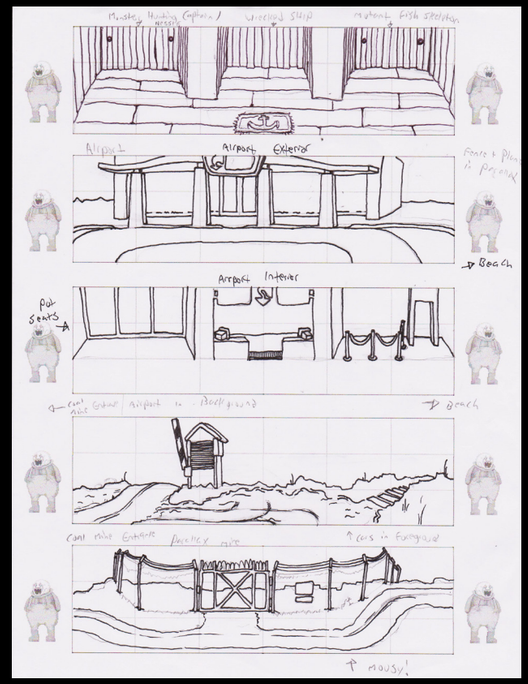
What challenges did you encounter during development?
Most of my challenges were material ones as I didn't grow up in a very wealthy home, and dropped out of high school. I lived with my father in a rural part of central Florida, so, even if I qualified for good jobs, they were at least an hour away. It was a particularly rough patch, and I didn't see much of a way out until indie games became a thing that people bought around 2008 and 2009.

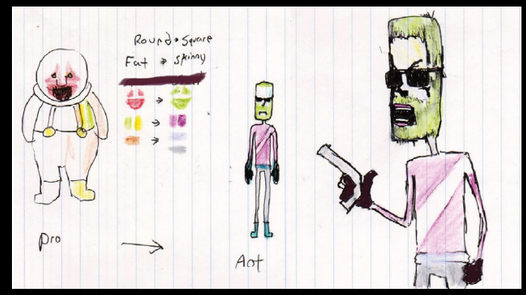
What parts of *Dropsy* are you most proud of?
I'm most jazzed about the idea that *Dropsy* could encourage people, even if just a little, to see the best in others – sometimes in spite of their attitude – and respond to them with kindness and humility. I'm also proud of Chris Schlarb's fantastic soundtrack. He and his band did a fantastic job.

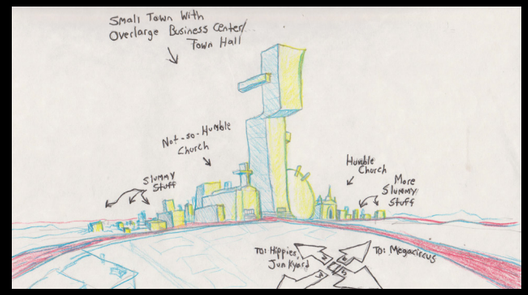
"Regarding the kind-hearted nature of Dropsy, *we wanted it to be different. Adventure game protagonists are often jerks and so it's nice to make something in which your character's goal is merely to make folks happy."*

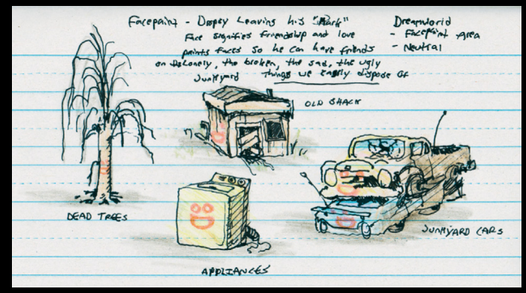
What advice would you give an indie developer wanting to make a point-and-click adventure game today?
Make sure that there's something meaningful at the heart of the thing you're making. It's infinitely less challenging to get through the low-motivation phases of development if it's built around something that you believe can help people, and you're genuinely passionate about.

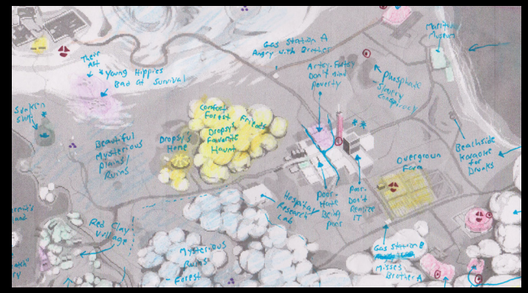












▲ A selection of ideas, design documents and level designs for *Dropsy*.

JAY THOLEN INTERVIEW

2015

Caren and the Tangled Tentacles
More than 30 years after the release of *Maniac Mansion*, demo-sceners Oliver Lindau, Martin Wendt and Kamil Wolnikowski produced this tribute to the genre's pioneering titles. Originally created for the 'Forum 64 Adventure Compo 2015', it won first place in every category. Made to the technical constraints of the Commodore 64, this modern adventure eventually received a physical release on cartridge with a save game feature.

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Oliver Lindau

Given that the Commodore 64 played an integral role in the evolution of the point-and-click adventure by hosting seminal titles like *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, it's fitting that a modern take on the genre should choose to utilise this vintage hardware. And that's precisely what the 2015 title *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* does. It looks and sounds just like a C64 game, and is even programmed in 6502 assembler code. A three-man team was responsible for this technical and artistic triumph: Dr. Martin Wendt handled programming and scripting, Kamil Wolnikowski was in charge of audio, and Oliver Lindau was head of art.

Before creating *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles*, were you a fan of point-and-click adventure games?
Yes, point-and-click adventures are among my favourite games since the 1980s. My all-time favourites include *The Longest Journey*, *Broken Sword*, *Monkey Island 2*, *Grim Fandango*, *Loom* and *The Book of Unwritten Tales*.

How did the concept for *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* about?
In adventure games, you probably expect things to be all about the story. Although it's an important part of *Caren*, everything was in fact subordinated to the game characters. The centre of the game should be a strong and gracious female character, and the player should solve problems and puzzles with her to advance the story and enlightenment. So we didn't want to restrict ourselves in further development. We defined certain puzzles or story sections as cornerstones and literally built places and the plot around it. The idea behind it was the flexibility to change the plot during development and to avoid backtracking to a large extent. To be honest, we had never worked on an adventure game before, so we weren't sure if that approach would work – but it did very well. We wanted the game's user interface to be as compact as possible so that the player can grasp everything at a glance. In fact, we put more emphasis on comfort than the presentation, even though you might not notice that as a player. There are minimum sizes for items and visual aids for every possible action. The menu navigation summarises actions with the inventory. Even though it sounds unusual, we'd seen *Caren* from the beginning as an alternate design approach compared to *Thimbleweed Park*. While Ron Gilbert brings the spirit of the LucasArts classics to life on modern hardware, our approach is what can be achieved creating a point-and-click adventure game with a three-man team, modern tools and current knowledge. Incredibly, I met Ron at Gamescom 2015, where he played a version of *Caren*. The world is sometimes a village!

What was your inspiration for the game and the story in general?
There were various inspirations, but we had no clear reference. Martin and I both wanted to put the story into the '80s early on, and we both agreed that it was going to be a murder mystery story. We were also directly influenced by the setting of a small American town, as portrayed in films like *The Goonies* or *Poltergeist*. I like the atmosphere and also the social interactions in such an environment. Speaking of the protagonist *Caren's* identity, Agent Scully from the *X-Files* and *Miss Marple* were inspirations.

Are the 'Tangled Tentacles' a reference to *Maniac Mansion*?
Yes, at least in a way. The tentacles have a different meaning here, but we were very aware of ambiguity of the title. There are also a few more things in the game that point towards *Maniac Mansion*, but we don't consider our adventure to be a fan project for old Lucasfilm games, or a spiritual spin-off.

Why did you choose the Commodore 64 as your platform?
It was the other way around: there was a C64 game development competition for creating adventure games in which we participated. However, we would probably have picked the C64 regardless. Martin and I had created a demo a few years earlier, showing a rebuilt *Zak McKracken* gaming scene. This was meant as an April Fool's joke, but we repeatedly talked about how and in what form you could modernise the point-and-click adventure to match the hardware. We lacked only the opportunity to put such a project into action, until the development competition arrived.

What challenges did you and the team face creating a point-and-click adventure on such an underpowered system?
Mainly the limited memory, which restricts every detail. These kinds of games are pretty heavy on graphics, which is quite a challenge and, technically, there are many things going on in parallel, which you don't see as a player. For example, the backgrounds are two-dimensional, but the positioning of the objects is actually three-dimensional. The characters cannot simply run from A to B; there are obstacles to circumnavigate, and spatial depth must be taken into account. Such things are not trivial on the C64. However, one can make a virtue of necessity; objects do not necessarily have to be dissipated in puzzles – it's often even more logical if they can be used as a tool, which also saves memory. By avoiding scrolling, you can have a higher level of detail for backgrounds and it also shortens the paths

"The tentacles have a different meaning here, but we were very aware of ambiguity of the title. There are also a few more things in the game that point towards Maniac Mansion, *but we do not consider our adventure to be a fan project for old Lucasfilm games, or a spiritual spin-off."*

of the pointer in each scene – which feels more comfortable when using a joystick. In the wayfinding, there was the side effect that *Caren* runs at different speeds depending on position and distance. We left it that way, because it seemed more natural than moving in constant pixel-by-pixel speed.

Do you think your roots in the demo scene helped to create something so technically advanced?
Definitely. While I would say that it helped, everyone in the team had experience in game development. However, if you're used to working closer to the metal, as people often do in the demo scene, you're also accustomed to thinking outside the box when it comes to problems. There are also some techniques that one would attribute to demos, such as the masking of foreground objects. It also helped that each of us is used to working as an individual as well, so basically everyone has maximum freedom to a certain degree. I can sort of come up with my own design ideas for certain rooms, while Martin has his own ideas on engine features or restrictions, and Kamil isn't providing music for us, but is instead composing his own music for our game. This is the enormous benefit of a three-man team that gets along together so extremely well.

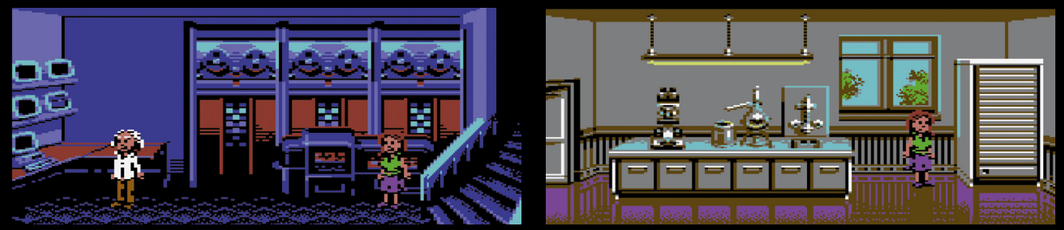
How long did *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* take to develop from concept to finish?
Roughly, I'd estimate it was between 15 and 16 months. The version for the competition had to be completed within nine months, plus another month for polishing. However, there was an extended version as well, which was published together with the book *Commodore 64: A Visual Commpendium*. For this version, we still needed about half a year to finish it.

What process do you go through when creating your pixel art?
This varies depending on the type of graphic. For the rooms, for example, I have a kind of rough version, which resembles vector graphics. Sometimes I prepare sketches for pictorial scenes as reference, but furniture, doors or windows are mostly drawn pixel by pixel in the tool Pro Motion. Up to this point, it is similar to the creation of pixel art on other systems. What's different in most games on a Commodore 64 is that graphics are based on redefined fonts. Think of a jigsaw puzzle or Lego: for example, one letter is a chair leg or sheet, you can put it on the screen as often as you like, but there is only a limited number of patterns. Speaking of animations, the process is similar to drawing on carbon paper. I roughly sketch the individual frames and as soon as the movements seem fluid enough, the graphics will be refined. However, the graphics must also be representable on the C64, which is why figures such as Caren must be broken down into individual components.

What elements of *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* are you most proud of?
That's a tough question, because there are many things. Related to my work, I'm most proud of the character sprites. Not just because of the movement, but because they can be used like a flexible kit. Clothing can be combined at will, the facial expressions are directly plotted by the code and, depending on the delay between the lower and upper part of the body, the walk correlates more to a female or male character. Talking about game features, I am still impressed with how flexible the engine is. The scripting is interleaved with assembler code. Compared to modern adventure systems like Visionaire or AGS, the standard actions are, of course, limited. But for every scene the script is open for hardware-related adjustments, which completely compensates for the supposed disadvantage. And last but not least is the sound. I like the mix of tunes and effects, and some of them – like the babbling sound or starting a bus – are simply awesome in my opinion.

How did it feel to have Ron Gilbert play *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* and comment how much he liked it?
I felt I'd grown about 10cm! Seriously, that was a sudden coincidence and I needed some time to reflect on that moment. Ron Gilbert is a hero of my youth. I was 15 years old playing *Maniac Mansion* for the first time, and 28 years later its creator talks to me about design decisions and the technical subjects of the *Caren* engine, and differences to SCUMM. That was something really special and meant so much to me, especially as he praised some of our design choices.

Do you have any plans for a *Caren 2*?
Yes, we're currently working on it. Of course, the story will be continued in the game. The city is being expanded and filled with considerably more life. In addition, we want to use some elements that already existed in the engine; for example, that characters react emotionally to gameplay actions. This already exists in the first part, but it only affects the facial expression and not the gameplay. In any case, the scope will be much larger.



▲ *Caren and the Tangled Tentacles* features 31 hand-pixelled interactive locations.

2015

Fran Bow

Players who presume all point-and-click games are comedies will find this game shocking. Set in 1944, it tells the harrowing story of *Fran Bow* who witnesses the gruesome and mysterious loss of her parents, and ends up in mental institution for children. The unique and surreal hand-drawn visuals were inspired by the artwork of Salvador Dalí and Mark Ryden, and are intended to reflect the psyche of a troubled child trying to make sense of the world around her.

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Natalia Figueroa

Husband-and-wife team Natalia Figueroa and Isak Martinsson founded Killmonday Games in 2012. Three years later, they released *Fran Bow*, a crowdfunded point-and-click adventure which quickly gained a cult following. Based in Sweden, Killmonday Games draws on the combined experience of its founders: Figueroa is a professional illustrator and animator, while Martinsson is a composer and programmer; both share writing duties. We were lucky enough to sit down with Figueroa to discuss *Fran Bow* and the appeal of the point-and-click genre.

Did you play many classic point-and-click adventure games from the '90s?
Actually, no. A computer was a luxurious thing to have back in the '90s, at least in our home. I started playing video games after 2003, when I moved from Chile to Sweden. When I discovered point-and-click adventures, I thought it was a marvellous way to tell a story, mix it with some brain food and create characters you'd be able to feel emotions with. That was the thing that I liked about this genre. My goal from the beginning was to make the point-and-click adventure genre a more accessible one, and, for that, I needed a better design; I felt I was the right one to do that. I do have some favourite point-and-click games, but they're not from the '90s. I still need to play a lot of them. Some of the games that I've enjoyed are *Alice is dead*, *The Cat Lady*, *The Dream Machine* and *Silent Age*, to name a few. This genre has those components I find most fun: storytelling, characters, a rhythm that doesn't make me stressed in a negative way, puzzles and lots of exploring! Since I was a child I've been exploring the means to be creative. I like the fact that, with point-and-click adventures, I get to create very complex stories that I can reveal through little actions, puzzles or even mini-games.

How did the concept of *Fran Bow* develop?
Fran Bow was meant to be a stop-motion animation back in 2009, that sadly (or should that be happily?) never got finished due to some people getting inside the studio we were using and destroying our miniatures. But Fran Bow and her cat, Mr. Midnight, are different now anyway. The idea to create a video game came from a dream that myself and Isak, my husband, programmer, music composer and other half at Killmonday Games, created together. We both wanted to be full-time artists and creators! We tried with short films, animations and music videos, but everything was so expensive to produce. We did a few good short films. One of them, *Säg färväl Isabell*, was aired on a TV channel in California, and *Vindsmekaren* was shown at the Uppsala International Short Film festival; I wrote both. We realised after watching the documentary *Indie Game: The Movie* that maybe we didn't need to be creating movies to share our stories because that was the main ingredient in what we love to do.

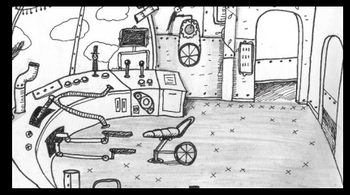
The story is very different to anything else. It's mature with some pretty disturbing storylines. What was the inspiration for this direction?
I think all the creepy, bloody and disturbing imagery of the game must be connected to all I see around me. I observe everything! Since an early age, I felt my life was excellent, and I was mostly happy, but some things haven't been so good. I've been a victim of rape, and several times a victim of sexual harassment. My father left me when I was very young, so I struggle a lot with feeling unworthy. I was cutting myself to feel emotions. I lost my best friend at the age of 20 because of a heart attack. Those are some of the things that have affected me deeply through the years, and those are the kinds of feelings that I understand and can write about. But since I had a positive childhood, I can't deny beauty, happiness viewed with childlike eyes, filled with a curiosity that still lives inside me. I can say that *Fran Bow* is half biographical and half fantasy, but, of course, I won't point out which is which! As I explained, I didn't play video games in my early years. I think I was inspired by many other artists when it comes to what *Fran Bow* looks like. I love oil paintings by Rembrandt and all their textures and colours. I loved movies like *Beetlejuice* and animations like *Hedgehog in the Fog*, so I guess it's a mix of those things.

Did you ever worry that you'd gone too far with the story and that it may be too much for some gamers?
Did we go too far? I don't think so. I can't thank enough all the people that are writing to us more than two years after release, to thank us for the game and how such a deep and dark story can bring about so much hope; *Fran Bow* is all about hope. When it comes to the point of thinking about those people that might feel bad about the theme, well I have two options: I do the game for those that will appreciate it just how I designed it, or I change my vision and everything I stand for, all to please someone who will never be able to love and care for what I create as much as I do. Obviously, the first option is the one I take seriously.

"The idea to create a video game came from a dream that myself and Isak, my husband, programmer, music composer and other half at Killmonday Games, created together. We both wanted to be full-time artists and creators!"

"I'm proud that I was able to paint over 150 backgrounds, all with several points of interaction – and animate all assets in the game. I'm also very proud that the game got so much love from the community."

Can you tell us about the development process of *Fran Bow*?
The development of *Fran Bow* was a rough one. Isak had to learn how to program because we were short of programmers. We were working mostly on weekends while continuing our 'regular jobs'; Isak was working installing Internet connections, and I had my very first job as a professional animator. We didn't have the money to make a game, so we decided to take the crowdfunding route after six months of development. We didn't have a clue on how to do a video game, but we did know how to do animations, short films, music and writing. We also were very naive when it came to timing and deadlines. We believed at first that *Fran Bow* would be finished in around six months, but it became a three-year journey. The crowdfunding was done via IndieGoGo; our goal was $20,000, and we got over $28,000, which didn't last for the whole three years – we had to use all our savings. One year before release, Isak's grandfather died and left him around $10,000, which helped us to get through the last year of development. When you reach that stage of development, where you know precisely where everything must be and what's left to do, then time just passes by unnoticed. I have no clear memories from back then, only my screen, my hand in pain because of too much drawing and some heavy drama with Isak. People are complicated. Put two human beings, pressed by money concerns and the constant idea of failure, in a room for seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and you're bound to get problems. Those three years of being like that, every single day, also got us to the point of wanting a divorce. We didn't know of course, but we realised that people need to communicate and share feelings, as well as make time for themselves and do something other than work, or go to therapy if you need somebody else to talk to. I learned so much creating *Fran Bow*.



▲ Hand-drawn concept art for *Fran Bow* by Natalia Figueroa.

The art style is very distinctive. What games, films or other media inspired this style?
I love textures. I think even when you create the most unrealistic world, if you use texture, light and colour in a way that is somehow near reality, you can get a cool style. After *Fran Bow* was released, people all over the world started to send us fan art and praising the art style so much. I still have a tough time accepting that people like what I do, but I'm just happy to be able to share it. Some people have pointed out that the art style reminds them of Tim Burton and Mark Ryden, and that, of course, makes me so happy because I love their work! First, I like to create rapid sketches of backgrounds and characters. Then I check the story to see if everything fits, if it needs any particular details, and so on. Then I'll just sit for endless hours in front of my computer, painting. Back then I had a small drawing tablet that got so worn down that it ended up with a hole in the middle! For animation, I'd spend some time using my acting skills. I usually look at myself in the mirror, playing around with the character's physical, mental and cultural attributes. After trials to find out how the characters move, I get to animate. For *Fran Bow*, I used Anime Studio, which is a bone-based 2D animation program. It allows me to animate characters as if they were dolls, and I can move their body parts quite freely, inside their own barriers.

"Back then I had a small drawing tablet that got so worn down that it ended up with a hole in the middle!"

What parts of *Fran Bow* are you proud of?
I'm proud that the game itself was finished. It's such a demanding thing to do! You want to fix details that nobody can see. And you need to know when things are done, and nothing can tell you when it is, except your guts and a clear visualisation of your idea. I'm proud that I was able to paint over 150 backgrounds, all with several points of interaction – and animate all assets in the game. I'm also very proud that the game got so much love from the community. Isak was able to create a whole album, with more than 40 tracks of music for the game, which has been a dream of his for a long time. He also learned how to program. I'm proud of us both; we got to be the artists we wanted to be.

Technobabylon

Wadjet Eye Games has a deserved reputation for helping independent developers realise and publish point-and-click-style games, and James Dearden's cyberpunk adventure is a fine example. Developed over five years using Adventure Game Studio, it has a strong '90s style look and feel, certainly inspired by *Beneath a Steel Sky*. Artist Ben Chandler added glowing neon and intricate details of urban decay to the 2D background art that give the game its neo-noir atmosphere.

Patrik Spacek

Patrik Spacek is a creative director, 3D artist and animator who has been working in the games industry since 1995, and is currently employed at Indigo Studios working on virtual reality projects. For point-and-click adventure fans, he will be most famous for spearheading an unofficial remake of *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, the LucasArts classic from the '90s. LucasArts requested that development stop in 2017, but Spacek is hopeful that work will continue at some point in the future.

How did you get into games design and why do you love point-and-click games?
Like millions of other people I have always loved video games, especially point-and-click graphic adventures. I started playing adventure games on the Commodore C64 in 1987, and my first game was *Maniac Mansion* on a 5.25-inch floppy disk. I was only nine years old and I didn't speak English at all – I was just clicking and trying whatever worked – but the game's atmosphere was so brilliant, I couldn't stop playing. I always say, if the game has a great design, you don't need text. A few years later, I bought an Amiga 500 and my adventure game madness started by playing *Zak McKracken*, *Monkey Island*, *Indiana Jones*, *Loom*, and so on. Back in 2004, I started *The Secret of Monkey Island* remake and I created several backgrounds for a test. It worked pretty well, but I would definitely make them differently today. There was a moment in my life when I wanted to leave video game development; I was hoping there was another job I would love, but after a while I always ended up sitting at the computer creating background art.

What made you want to do a modern remake of *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*?
The *Indiana Jones* world has been my greatest passion since watching *Raiders of the Lost Ark* on VHS back in 1981, followed by *Temple of Doom* and *The Last Crusade* later on. I remember watching *Temple of Doom* and it was like watching a horror movie at the time, and the *Last Crusade* became my favourite in the action adventure genre. In 2013, I had a break from work and I had nothing to do, but I wanted to expand my portfolio and try new things... Or, in other words, I wanted to do what I know best, and that's creating backgrounds for adventure games. I did some research on what had been done by other people and what we were missing. LucasArts shutting down in 2013 helped me with the final decision and I decided to go with *Fate of Atlantis*, a remake that no one had attempted. *Fate of Atlantis* has been in my heart for a long time for many reasons: excellent storytelling, great backgrounds, film atmosphere, a long adventure full of artefacts, archaeology, Atlantis itself, German history, action, romance and *Indiana Jones*, of course! It has been the best opportunity and the biggest challenge that I've started in my life. The challenge is not only because Disney owns the IP now, but also because there are 9,900 lines of dialogue and 200 backgrounds!

What is your role in the remake?
I am the creative director, lead artist, animator... an 'all-in-one artist' basically! I create all the backgrounds, some of the characters, rigging and animations, and do final retouching as well. I also make any final executive decisions if there are any problems.

What was your main objective with the remake?
Before I started taking this project seriously, I did some research and I was looking for a few people that could help me with the story and characters. I found Dale Dassel, who is a writer, collector and has a great knowledge of *Indiana Jones* in general. He wrote a novelisation of the *Fate of Atlantis* that describes events in detail. We wanted to expand the original story without breaking it. We wanted to add more artefacts, more information about Atlantis, and new scenes, so the player would be playing the original game with the possibility of new, unexplored events. *Fate of Atlantis* came on 12 floppy disks on the Amiga, which was a big issue back in 1992 and the developers were limited back then. We don't have those limitations.

What improvements did you want to make?
Improving the art and animations has been the major goal. The art is the thing you're looking at all the time. The player is focusing on the character's personality, reactions, smoothness of movement and visual presentation over everything else. The move to high definition brings up several challenges that have to be considered as well: powerful computers, large TVs, more storage, better game engines... But also the basics, such as voice-overs, high-quality audio and cinematics. All those things need to be presented if you have the budget to do so. But, even without the budget, we're trying to create the best we can for all our fans, and the goal is to make it as beautiful as possible.

What has the reception been like from fans of the original?
Fans that follow us and support our petition are the best fans we could ask for, and we do this for them! This project started from scratch and without any hope, but it has became famous and is growing progressively. We got a ton of positive feedback, but the fans also help us with criticism, decisions or anything we cannot do by ourselves. I call it 'international cooperation'. Every project has haters, but we don't take it as a bad thing; even haters pay a lot of attention to what you're doing, and spreading the word is a good thing.

What are some of you favourite point-and-click adventure games?
There are many, but I always focused on Lucasfilm Games productions. I had problems with Sierra games because they have so much dialogue, which made them less enjoyable for me as someone who doesn't speak English as a first language. As I mentioned before, if you don't speak English, but the game design makes sense just by watching it, then the atmosphere explains everything. You don't need text because the team did a great job of expression. So my favourite adventure games are *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*, *The Dig*, *Beneath a Steel Sky* and *Simon the Sorcerer*. Those games have very logical design, brilliant storylines, unique atmosphere, varied environments, a cinematic look, comedy and sarcasm, all blended together to make them the most memorable games of all time.

Why do you think the genre is so fondly remembered?
I think this question is mostly for people that were been born back in the '80s. We grew up in this era and we watched the hardware and video games developing rapidly. Studios were heavily competing and the video game industry was developing fast. We were kids who played those games on the release date and every day we impatiently waited for new games to come out. We judged new computers and video game artworks, compared the quality from Atari 800 XL to Commodore 64 to Amiga 500 to PC... we complained about the excessive number of floppy disks and TV adapters, expensive monitors and printers. It's great nostalgia that made a mark on us. All those games presented visual improvements; more pixels, colours, and higher resolution quality. They were part of our lives and the heroes in them became our escape from the reality. It was a time of innovations; to interact and lead these on-screen heroes was a new thing, and the point-and-click adventure game was a new genre – we felt like we were playing movies. For example, in *Monkey Island*, I became Guybrush and felt the same love for Elaine! The game took me to the mystical island to see cannibals, fight with pirates and much more besides. *The Fate of Atlantis* gave me an incredible adventure starring my favourite hero and showed me many new and exotic places and characters. *Simon The Sorcerer* let me live a fairytale; a mixture between reality and fantasy. *The Dig* took me into space and brought me to the meteor with many unexpected events. That's the reason we are creating remakes – to remind people and present the legendary classics and successful games to new generations. They are so unforgettable!

Have you talked to any original classic adventure games creators?
Some of the original creators are still alive, and I believe those are the only people who are able to create or remake their own classic games. I strongly believe they should keep the IPs to be able to continue on this journey, and not let huge companies drag it down and make it forgettable. During the *Fate of Atlantis* development, I spoke to Hal Barwood and Noah Falstein a few times. I also I talked to many artists like James Dollar, Mark Ferrari, Mike Ebert, Sean Turner and William Eaken, then programmers like Sean Clark and Michael Stemmle. I was the iOS game tester for Ron Gilbert and Gary Winnick's *Thimbleweed Park*. All those developers have been very kind and helpful, and some of them are very happy with my progress on *Fate of Atlantis: Special Edition*, and they would like to see an official release of this remake.

▲ High-definition recreations of some classic scenes from *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*.

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2016

Deponia Doomsday

For the fourth game in the *Deponia* trilogy, Daedalic Entertainment once again offers classic mouse-driven point-and-click gameplay, crude childish humour, a confusing story, convoluted puzzles and 70 largely imbecilic characters. Thankfully, that's exactly what fans of the *Deponia* series have come to enjoy. With extraordinary high-resolution graphics, this 'parallelquel' genuinely feels like you're interacting with a Saturday morning cartoon show.

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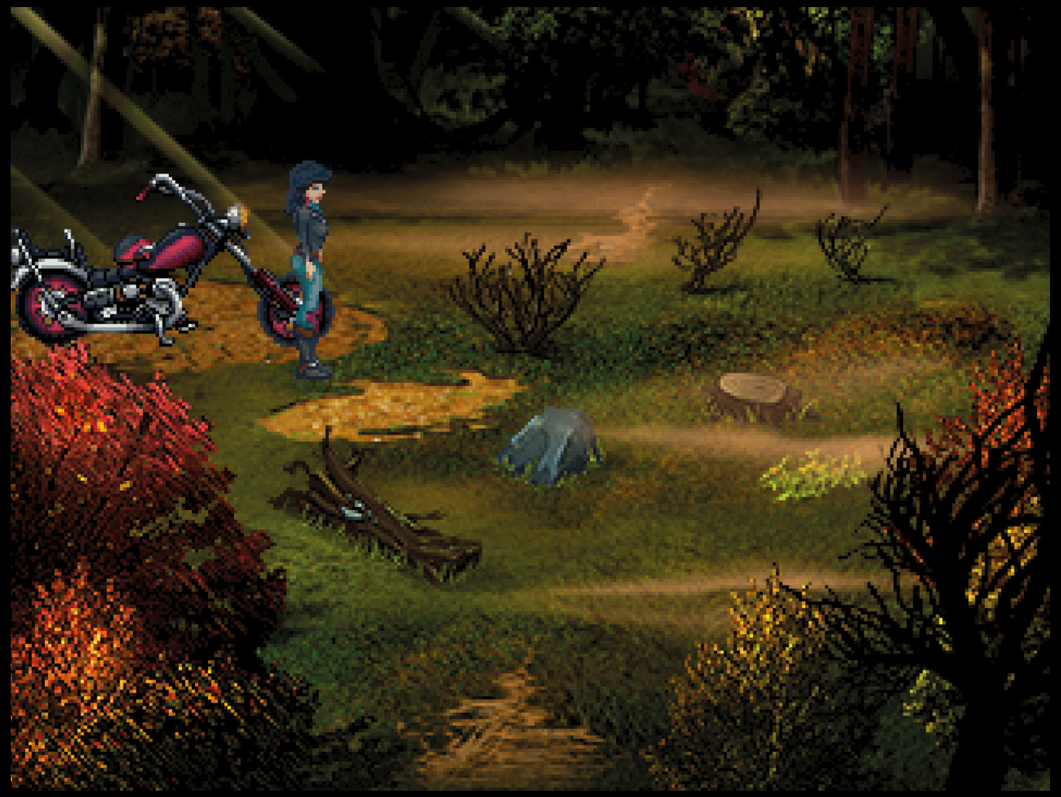
Kathy Rain

You'd be forgiven for thinking that *Kathy Rain* came out in 1995, not only because that's the date in which it's set but because it plays like a tribute to the adventure games of that time. With pixelated graphics, on-screen icons and even a 4:3 aspect ratio, every effort has been made to make this game as close to its inspirations as possible. Produced by Joel Staaf Hästö using Adventure Game Studio, the lengthy, engaging story is reinforced by accessible gameplay and logical inventory puzzles.



The Lion's Song

Mi'pu'mi Games' emotional series looks at the lives of a composer, artist, and mathematician as they struggle against overwhelming feelings of insecurity. Each of the four episodes uses the point-and-click interface slightly differently, but the varied player interactions all help each protagonist to fulfil their potential. The sombre sepia-toned colour palette is appropriate for the pre-war Austria setting, and varied viewing angles encourage an appropriate feeling of anxiety in the player.

2016

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Stefan Srb

Based in Vienna, Stefan Srb – also known as 'LeafThief' – plies his trade as a game designer at Mi'pu'mi Games, and found critical success with the gorgeous 2D point-and-click adventure *The Lion's Song*. Originally created for a game jam in 2014, it has since grown into a vast and detailed episodic adventure.

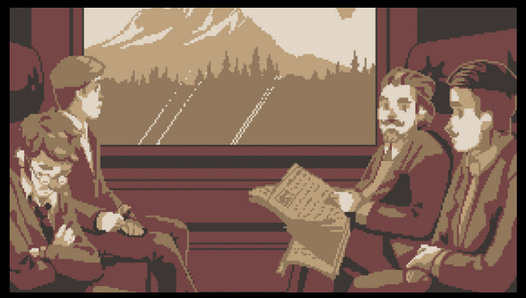
When did you know that you wanted a career in video game design/art?
I think I was in my early 20s when it occurred to me that making video games was a viable career. However, I'd dabbled in making small point-and-click 'fan' adventure games since my late teens. The idea that I could tell my own small episode of a *Monkey Island* or *Indiana Jones* – beyond that, even, my own stories – fascinated me.

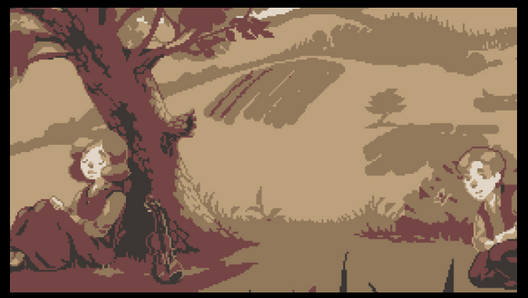
Is it fair then to say that you're a fan of classic LucasArts and Sierra point-and-click adventure games?
I'm a huge fan of the point-and-click adventure games of the '90s. I grew up playing these games, spending what now feels like hours, days, weeks with my big brother, trying to figure out how to solve certain puzzles and make the story advance. Among my favourites are *Monkey Island* and *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*. But way, way up there – my Holy Grail, if you will – is *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. That game cast its spell on me. It felt big, magical and intriguing. You could play it in three different styles with altering locations, dialogues – whole storylines – each time. That really impressed me, today even more than back when I was a kid.

Can you tell us how the creation of *The Lion's Song* started? What was your role in the game's development and design?
The Lion's Song started as a game jam for Ludum Dare 30. That was in August 2014. The theme for the jam was 'Connected Worlds'. I participated on my own, did all the graphics, story, scripting, even sounds and music. But this original version of the game was much smaller than what *The Lion's Song* is today. It took about five to ten minutes to play through once, but all the core concepts for what would later become *Episode 1: Silence* and the tone of the whole season were already there.

Can you remember where the inspiration for the story came from?
The inspiration for the story came very much out of the stressful jam situation. That place where you're half-a-day into the jam, wildly flailing your arms at the keyboard to get anything done. I knew I wanted to do something revolving around a phone call, but when it came to actually writing the story I hit a dead end. Writer's block. To clear my head, I strolled through the first district of Vienna. I tried to see my familiar surroundings through new eyes: "What is Vienna to others? To people who don't live here? What do THEY see?" I passed the amazing architecture, walked through narrow cobblestone streets. An imposing Palais to my right; a tiny instrument shop to my left. Suddenly it occurred to me: "The capital of music." It was a kind of epiphany where all the pieces fell into place. *The Lion's Song* would be a story about creative block and inspiration. About how creatives – how I, in my blockade, trying to make a game – can face and overcome their crises.

Was *The Lion's Song* inspired by any classic point-and-click adventure games in particular?
The in-game map of the first district of Vienna as a means to traverse the city was heavily inspired by *Monkey Island* and *Indy* games. Another thing that comes to mind is the presentation and handling of on-screen text. The old adventure games had a vocabulary of displaying on-screen 'spoken' text in a certain way so that players would immediately recognise that phenomenon; for example, when a character is talking 'over' another character, the on-screen text mimics this visually. However, one of the most important influences in terms of tone wasn't a 'classic', but was still a point-and-click adventure game: *Kentucky Route Zero* by Cardboard Computer. We strived for making something similarly tranquil or magical.





What was your thinking behind breaking the game into mini-stories?
The early 20th century in Austria – more specifically Vienna – is called the 'Wiener Moderne' (Viennese Modern). It's a time of great artistic and scientific endeavour and exchange across disciplines – and all just before the beginning of World War I. We wanted to shine a light on different forms of creativity and on how that exchange among different people enriched the work of single creators. But even further than that, how 'ordinary' people were influenced by the creations and how everything came to an abrupt and violent end with the beginning of WWI. The episode format fit this purpose perfectly.

Why did you make the brave choice to use a minimal colour palette?
The stylised visuals are 100 per cent a result of having a very limited amount of time during a game jam. When I made the original version of *The Lion's Song* I needed something that players would associate with 'old' and 'vintage', so I went for a sepia palette. In addition, I like to challenge myself using as little means as possible to communicate something. The main palette was five colours – that helped a lot with getting the game done for the game jam!

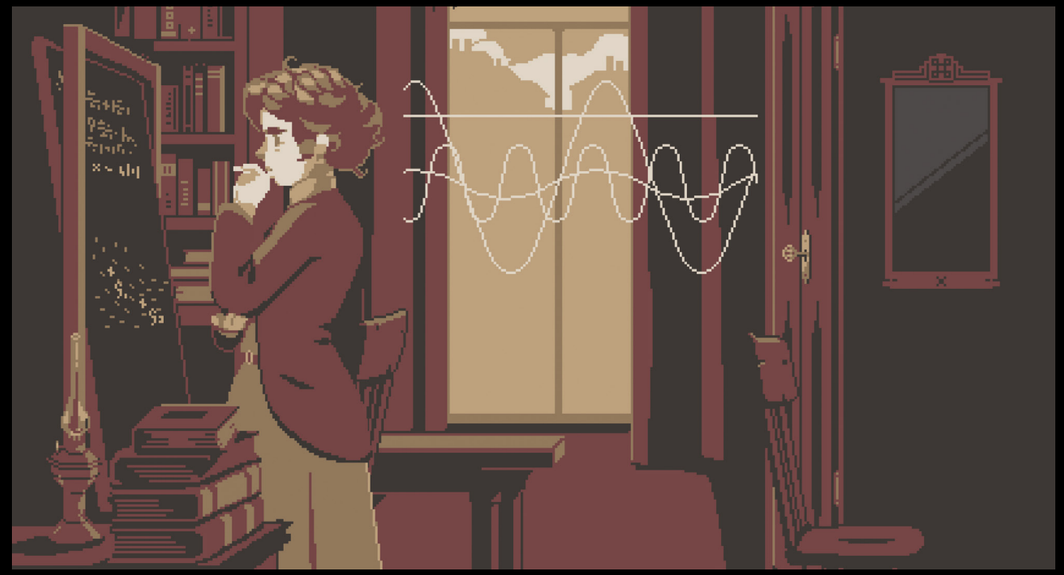
Was it drawn by hand first or straight onto the computer? Which art software package did you use?
In most cases we worked digitally from the get-go. The concepts for backgrounds or rough animations were often done in just two colours to get a quick feel, so we could test in-game and make changes on the fly. We used a combination of Adobe Photoshop for backgrounds and keyframes and David Capello's fantastic software package Aseprite for animations.

"The stylised visuals are 100 per cent a result of having a very limited amount of time during a game jam. When I made the original version of The Lion's Song *I needed something that players would associate with 'old' and 'vintage', so I went for a sepia palette."*

How long did development take?
The Lion's Song took us about one year and nine months to develop.

Did you encounter any challenges?
Definitely. *The Lion's Song* was the first game we developed from the beginning to the very end, including PR and publishing – that meant we did a lot of things for the very first time. For example, we knew there were many things we couldn't do in-house, so we had to find the right partners – people that understood the vision and brought their own creativity and expertise to the project. It took quite some time but eventually we found all the right people and they did a wonderful job!

Which aspects are you most proud of?
I think the one thing I am happiest about is the fact that we were able to make something that people can enjoy and that enriches people's lives. At some point in development you always hit that moment of going, "Will anyone care about this at all?". Turns out people do! Turns out we made something that resonated with them, and that's something I'm very glad we achieved.



▲ The pixel graphics within *The Lion's Song* are incredibly stylised with a sepia-palette.

2017

Thimbleweed Park

"Imagine you've found a classic adventure game you've never played before," promised Ron Gilbert in a pitch for backers on Kickstarter. *Thimbleweed Park* certainly delivered on this promise, using pixelated graphics combined with the triumphant return of the verb-and-item interface sitting at the bottom of the screen. Adult humour, a twisting plot and complicated puzzles are in abundance, but this makes it the perfect 'thank you' to fans who have loved the genre for the last 30 years.

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Paradigm

Set in a post-apocalyptic world inspired by a mix of Eastern European '80s culture, the 2D graphics in *Paradigm* were pitched as Pixar meets *Fallout*. Every environment is awash with detail, and every object prompts a different reaction when examined. The unattractive yet over-confident mutant, Paradigm, makes for a unique protagonist, who's controlled using a mouse interface borrowed from *Full Throttle*. The player must solve puzzles using just four actions.

Jacob Janerka

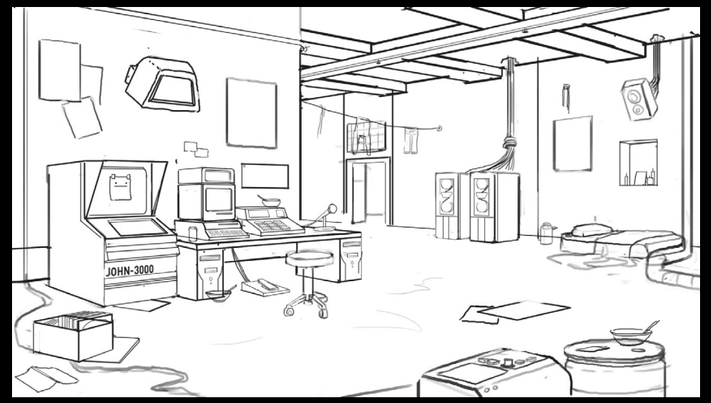
Starring a 'handsome mutant' and 'a genetically engineered sloth that vomits candy', Jacob Janerka's surreal point-and-click adventure title *Paradigm* is in good company when compared to other left-field examples of the genre. Crowdfunded in 2014 to the tune of 36,557 Australian dollars – 250 per cent over its initial funding goal – Janerka's bizarre adventure mixes sci-fi with comedy, and is heavily inspired by the best games of the LucasArts era.

Did you play many point-and-click adventure games from the '90s? If so, which are your favourites?
Point-and-click adventure games were my jam when I was a kid. I used to obsess about figuring out what to do while I was sitting in school, to the disdain of my teachers. Clearly opening a gigantic monkey's head with a cotton swab was more important than future job security. My favourite games were, of course, the classic *Monkey Island*, *Day of the Tentacle*, *Full Throttle* and *Sam & Max Hit the Road*.

What do you love so much about the genre?
Well, at the moment the best part of the genre is that I can exchange copies of my own adventure for goods and services, primarily food. Other than that, I was always enamoured by the exploration and comedy aspect of the games. Being able to click on all sorts of objects and get feedback was especially something that I remember.

How did the concept of *Paradigm* develop, and what titles inspired it?
Unfortunately, the answer to this question is always anti-climatic as people expect I dunked my head in bath salts and tripped out in the desert only to come back with the full game design document. In reality, I just sat down a lot in my room at my parents' house and brainstormed on a piece of paper, combining concepts from all sorts of things I loved at the time. Stuff like *Gattaca*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Mighty Boosh*, *Flight of the Conchords* and, of course, the whole LucasArts catalogue.

Can you tell us about the development process of *Paradigm*?
The majority of the ideas of *Paradigm* weren't created under the influence of drugs, as most journalists like to suggest. Primarily, I like to do my patented stolen technique of 'Word Vomit' in which I write whatever comes out of my head onto a piece of paper until I eventually come up with a solution or unique idea. Once I have a base idea, normally it's developed more traditionally with a regular brainstorm, or I will stew over it during a long, semi-romantic walk.



Concept sketch of Paradigm's Room – the opening scene in the game.

Why did you choose to use the adventure game engine Visionaire?
At the time it was one of the few engines that allowed me to create an adventure game from scratch without having any programming knowledge. My brain at the time had zero capacity to do the programmy, only to do the arty. It also had a really strong catalogue of commercially released games with the engine, so I took the plunge.

Was humour an important thing you wanted to put into *Paradigm*?
Paradigm was actually never a comedy; it was hyperbole of my life experience – people just like to laugh at my suffering, but they give me money to do so, which makes it okay.

What was the inspiration for the art style?
I always found it interesting when people mention I have a unique art style. If I'm being honest, it's an attempt to get to a certain technical level; when it fails to hit that, then I blend the final colours with my tears. However, I have a bunch of influences like *Moebius*, Miyazaki, *Akira*, Impressionist art, surrealism and all sorts of real-life references.

"Almost everything is made with Photoshop, from the paintings to the animation. However, I did occasionally use Adobe After Effects and other random programs to achieve some specific function."

How did you create the art in the game?
Almost everything is made with Photoshop, from the paintings to the animation. However, I did occasionally use Adobe After Effects and other random programs to achieve some specific function. Occasionally the game would use other random styles so I'd do lots of traditional stuff, like sculpture and watercolour work. Generally the process was that I either scribbled very roughly on paper or on the computer. Then I created a more refined, tight drawing of what I wanted, making sure composition and the values were correct. Eventually, I'd move on to rendering the whole piece after I studied from life or from a photo to bring a certain level of believability to whatever I was painting.

How long did development take?
I originally had the basic plot idea in my head in 2012. I started to flesh out the art style in early 2014 for fun, then finally I took it seriously at the end of that year when I started the Kickstarter. So the game roughly took around three years' full-time development.

What challenges did you encounter during development?
One of the most frustrating and best parts of making *Paradigm* was switching gear every time I needed to do a certain facet of making the game. While it was refreshing to move on from grinding out art assets to dialogue writing, it was occasionally hard to get back into the groove after those skills rusted a bit. Also, sitting by yourself in a room a lot came with isolation and a complimentary doughnut cushion.

What parts of *Paradigm* are you most proud of?
What a silly question; of course it is the part where I got my friend to dress up in his IT office uniform with greased up hair in front of a green screen and do his best dad dance to be a Desktop Dancer IT Assistant. Other than that, I'm generally proud of making an alternative ending in which the antagonist gets a sentient eggplant pregnant.

Recently, you've teased some mock-ups for a *Seinfeld* point-and-click adventure. Will it ever see the light of day?
I'm just a big fan of *Seinfeld* and I wanted to practise my pixel art, so I did a really simple mock-up of a George sprite. It got a few Internet points on IMGUR so I decided to keep going on with it for fun when I wanted to wind down from developing *Paradigm*.

An illustration showing the visual development of *Paradigm*'s main protagonist.

Eventually, it just grew and grew and the feedback was phenomenal whenever I showed it online. I think it becoming 100 per cent real would be close to impossible because of various rights and contracts required, let alone getting a green light from Jerry and Larry to go ahead with it. I imagine they'd be sceptical of the idea of a 25-year-old from a random Australian city making it. However, a boy can dream of getting a cease and desist letter.

What advice would you give an indie developer wanting to make a point-and-click adventure game today?
Become a banker. If you'd rather not be a banker, really consider what you're making and don't go into it blind. While it's nice just to make whatever you want and hope someone likes it, still consider who it's for, what kind of scope it has, and what kind of marketing you can do for it. This way it'll help you to continue to make more awesome adventure games! Also, don't smoke crack.

2017

Tokyo Dark

While the point-and-click genre has often been dominated by Western developers, in Japan visual novels are the typical choice for telling an interactive story – *Tokyo Dark* fuses them both. Using an anime art style, the game starts with detective Itō Ayami hunting for her partner who went missing a few days earlier. Decision boxes appear around all the things you can interact with and while this means puzzles are simplified, every action you make in the game affects your S.P.I.N. – a system that tracks your Sanity, Professionalism, Investigation and Neurosis.

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2017

The Darkside Detective

When Paul Conway and Christopher Colston created a four-screen demo they didn't expect much. Targeted at an audience who, like the duo, loved classic LucasArts and Sierra games, the demo caught the eye of the gaming press and it evolved into a full title. It uses a resolution lower than the classic games, but the addition of HD lighting creates a strange mix of old and new that imbues the game with its own character and atmosphere.

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Paul Conway

With ten years in the industry under his belt, and credits for over 100 games, Paul Conway is a veteran of game development and has worked on million-selling franchises like *The Sims* and *Theme Park*. He now plies his trade at Irish studio Spooky Doorway, which released the point-and-click adventure *Darkside Detective* in 2017.

Did you play many classic point-and-click adventure games from the '90s? Which ones stick out as your personal favourites?
I was a console kid when I was growing up, so one of the first point-and-click adventure games I properly played was *Broken Sword* on the PlayStation. When I did eventually get my hands on a PC, I sourced as many point-and-click games as I could and devoured them. I played all the obvious ones, of course, but I think the ones which made the most indelible mark on me were *Beneath a Steel Sky*, *Broken Sword* and *The Dig*.

What do you love so much about the genre?
When I first played point-and-click adventure games I was amazed by how it felt to take part in a meaningful story. Most other games at the time were about skill and reaction speed, which is great, but story was always in the background; a tacked-on component giving context as to why you were playing. I liked how adventure games slowed things right down and made you be in the story, feel the place you were in, and want to know the characters you met. The pace also allowed me enjoy the wonderfully rendered scenes. I think narrative has moved on a lot in games these days; the industry as a whole knows the importance it holds a lot more now. But, to me, point-and-clicks still exist in an arguably magical balance of being a game in a story, rather than the other way round.

Is your work inspired by any particular artists?
I'm a bit of a magpie when it comes to my inspirations; I pick up things from movies, comics, art and other games, and convert them into ideas for visual styles. Some artists' work has obviously influenced my approach to point-and-click graphics, such as Bill Tiller (*Full Throttle*, *The Dig*) and Mark Ferrari (*Thimbleweed Park*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*). Éric Chahi's work on *Another World* has also informed my approach to game art for a long time. I love how he found a fantastic art style within the limitations of his vector engine, but to me it's a style which still remains fresh and distinct. Game art has always been finding the art within the limitations.

How did the concept of *The Darkside Detective* develop?
The initial concept for *The Darkside Detective* happened quite by accident. I was running a game jam in Galway in November 2014 with Christopher Colston. Once we had everyone set up we decided to kill time by making our own game. We made a quick adventure game in about eight hours called *The Darkside*. We just wanted to pull some influences from pop culture into something fun to work on for the afternoon, so we weren't being too precious about it. The resulting game had a funny low-resolution style; it was only about four screens long and made little sense. But when we posted the demo online people really seemed to like it a lot. We figured there was life in expanding it more and decided to develop a full game. The idea really grew into something special after we brought Dave McCabe on board to write it, though. The setting and two main characters remained, however. They honestly just arrived on the day.

Can you tell us about the development process of *The Darkside Detective*?
The development process was usually quite loose. We'd discuss ideas and settings which we thought were a good fit for a spooky investigation. When we'd found something we'd all liked, we'd rough out the main story beats and then Dave would work out a structure for the game. Once we all agreed on it, I'd do some rough stickman sketches of the scenes and our developer, Tracey McCabe, would wire them up into a functioning demo. More often than not, when we got to this stage we'd discover that the case was confusing, not fun or just a little tedious. So we'd end up redesigning it completely, or reworking large portions of it. In essence, each case got designed twice. First on paper, then redesigned when we put it together and could actually interact with it. This could happen more than once on a case, too.

"I'm a bit of a magpie when it comes to my inspirations; I pick up things from movies, comics, art and other games, and convert them into ideas for visual styles."

Why did you choose the low-res art style?
Superbrothers: Sword & Sworcery had done some interesting things with its stripped-back style, and I'd been curious to see if I could create something interesting with a low resolution myself; I just hadn't had a chance to try it up until the game jam. I wanted to see if I could capture the essence of a world and its characters with less information; it just happened that the time pressure of a game jam really put me on the spot to find something.

What software did you use to create the art?
All the art and animations are created in Photoshop. I start out drawing up a scene at the extremely low resolution, even smaller than the original VGA adventure games. Once the scene was drawn up I'd blow it up and then start adding in large gradients of colour and darkness to pull in the atmosphere, and then I'd add a glow to light sources to create pools of light in the gloom. It was very effective because it captured an atmosphere very easily and it was a great way for us to quickly turn out scenes and experiment with the game. I created a lot of artwork which was never used.

PAUL CONWAY INTERVIEW

How long did development take?
Overall, it took us two-and-a-half years to finish the game. We were working on it exclusively in our spare time, outside of our other work and life commitments. The game probably could have been made in about nine months if we were working on it full-time, but I think the extra time allowed for it to breathe and evolve as a project. The characters and humour wouldn't have been as strong had we developed it in a more compressed amount of time.

What challenges did you encounter?
I think the most challenging part of development was trying to fit it into our lives in our spare time without any budget. It's a game made of pure heart, but it was exhausting working late and on weekends to piece it all together. Keeping our enthusiasm and energy levels up was not without its difficulties. To put it into perspective, I worked on over 25 other game projects as a freelancer from the start to the finish of *The Darkside Detective*'s development cycle.

Which aspects are you most proud of?
I think I'm most proud of the work I did in the finale case, 'The Don of the Dead'. The art style could be restrictive, so much so it affected game design at times, but 'The Don of the Dead' was the last case we worked on, so I'd really perfected the method of injecting subtle colour and details into the scenes. The cemetery scenes in particular stand out to me; I love how the blues, purples and greens work so richly together.

You're currently developing a new point-and-click adventure game called *Beyond the Dunes*. What can we expect from the game and what was your inspiration?
Beyond the Dunes is a personal project I'm working on in my spare time, sort of a learning project if you will. It's my attempt at a serious sci-fi setting, in a similar vein to *The Dig* or *Beneath a Steel Sky*. It's inspired by those games, and is also a mash-up of movie worlds like *Star Wars* and *Mad Max*. It's set in the distant future where the world has turned into a dust bowl after an unknown ecological disaster. Humanity has been reduced to little more than a scattering of settlements in the desert, and remnants of the technologically advanced past still permeate the landscape, such as droids and rogue battle AIs still thinking they're at war. The lead character, Onya discovers a mysterious signal being broadcast from deep in the desert. It promises salvation for humanity, so she decides to set off with her trusty mule droid, Dudley, to see if she can discover its source.

What would be your dream project?
My dream project would be to work on a point-and-click adventure based on John Carpenter's *The Thing*. It's one of my favourite movies, and I think the setting and the paranoia in the story would work perfectly in an adventure game. I recently did some mock-ups of what it would look like as a game. It went pretty viral at the time, receiving thousands of 'likes' on Twitter and even ending up on the front page of Reddit. I ended up contacting Universal to try to get my hands on the license but unfortunately it wasn't available. It looks like it will remain a dream project.

"My dream project would be to work on a point-and-click adventure based on John Carpenter's The Thing*."*

Do you still play many classic point-and-click adventure games nowadays?
I do, but not as often as I'd like to. They can be quite time-consuming to play, and I'm usually too busy making my own games or working on the art for other people's projects. I try to get a couple in each year if I can. Hopefully, I can carve out some more time to play more in the future.

▲ Detective McQueen and his sidekick, Officer Dooley, solving mysteries in 2018's *The Darkside Detective*.

▲ Mock-up point-and-click based on John Carpenter's *The Thing*.

Epilogue

Sadly, all good things must come to an end, be they books about awesome classic adventure games, or actual awesome classic adventure games you'd spent hours clicking, puzzling and being thoroughly engrossed playing through. So let's take a moment to celebrate those final scenes, from unexpected funfairs and patriotic tentacle windsocks to exploding zombie pirates, and saving the world from dastardly Templars with a little touch of Gallic romance. And, of course, lots and lots of sunsets. Thank you for reading!

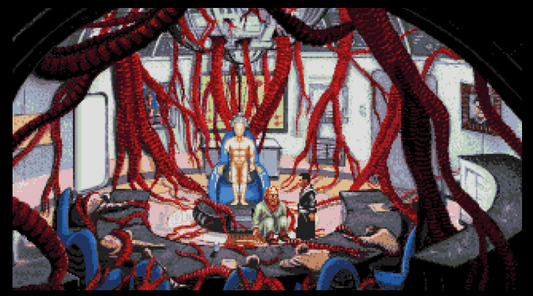
Maniac Mansion: Day of the Tentacle.

Police Quest: In Pursuit of the Death Angel.

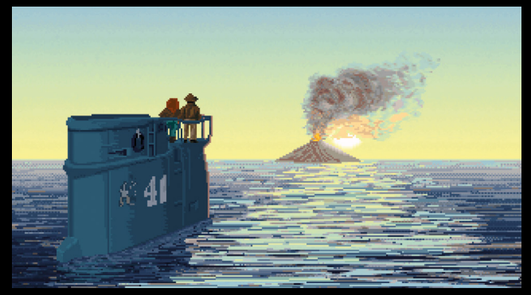
Simon the Sorcerer.

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge.

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers.



Beneath a Steel Sky.



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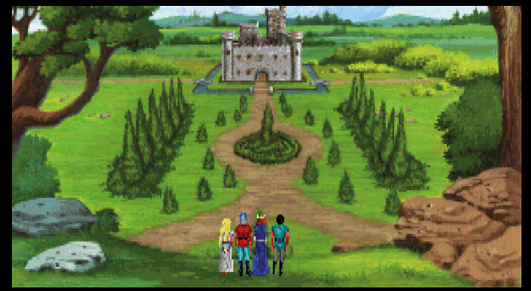

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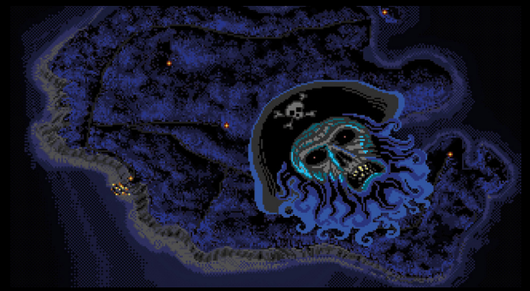

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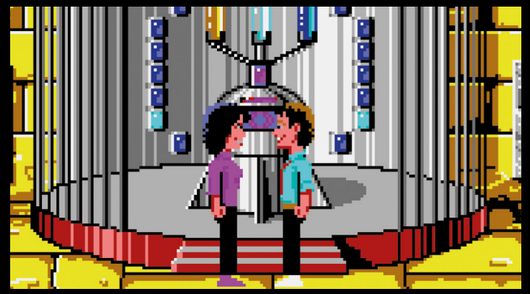

Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders.

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